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VOL. 4059

MR. CREWE'S CAREER

BY

WINSTON CHURCHILL

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. 2

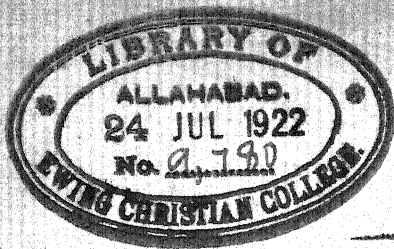
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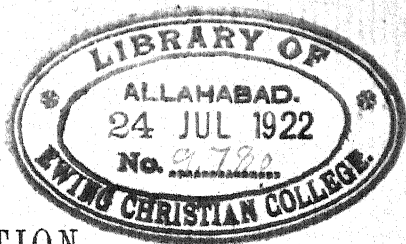
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MR. CREWE'S CAREER. By WINSTON CHURCHILL.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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WINSTON CHURCHILL

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IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. II

LEIPZIG

BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ

1908.

CONTENTS

OF VOLUME II.

| | |
|---|------|
| CHAPTER I. | Page |
| The "Book of Arguments" is opened | 7 |
| CHAPTER II. | |
| Busy Days at Wedderburn | 23 |
| CHAPTER III. | |
| A Spirit in the Woods | 48 |
| CHAPTER IV. | |
| Mr. Jabe Jenney entertains | 72 |
| CHAPTER V. | |
| Mr. Crewe: an Appreciation | 94 |
| CHAPTER VI. | |
| St. Giles of the Blameless Life | 111 |
| CHAPTER VII. | |
| In which Euphrasia takes a Hand | 123 |
| CHAPTER VIII. | |
| A Falling-out in High Places | 139 |

| CHAPTER IX. | | Page |
|--------------------------------------|--|------|
| An Adventure of Victoria's | | 149 |
| CHAPTER X. | | |
| More Adventures | | 170 |
| CHAPTER XI. | | |
| The Focus of Wrath | | 189 |
| CHAPTER XII. | | |
| The Arena and the Dust | | 207 |
| CHAPTER XIII. | | |
| The Voice of an Era | | 244 |
| CHAPTER XIV. | | |
| The Vale of the Blue | | 267 |
| CHAPTER XV. | | |
| P.S. | | 279 |

MR. CREWE'S CAREER.

CHAPTER I.

THE "BOOK OF ARGUMENTS" IS OPENED.

THE Honourable Hilary Vane returned that day from Fairview in no very equable frame of mind. It is not for us to be present at the Councils on the Palatine when the "Book of Arguments" is opened, and those fitting the occasion are chosen and sent out to the faithful who own printing-presses and free passes. The Honourable Hilary Vane bore away from the residence of his emperor a great many memoranda in an envelope, and he must have sighed as he drove through the leafy roads for Mr. Hamilton Tooting, with his fertile mind and active body. A year ago, and Mr. Tooting would have seized these memoranda of majesty, and covered their margins with new suggestions: Mr. Tooting, on occasions, had even made additions to the "Book of Arguments" itself—additions which had been used in New York and other States with telling effect against Mr. Crewes there. Mr. Tooting knew by heart the time of going to press of every country newspaper which had passes (in exchange for advertising!). It was two

o'clock when the Honourable Hilary reached his office, and by three all the edicts would have gone forth, and the grape-shot and canister would have been on their way to demolish the arrogance of this petty Lord of Leith.

"Tooting's a dangerous man, Vane. You oughtn't to have let him go," Mr. Flint had said. "I don't care a snap of my finger for the other fellow."

How Mr. Tooting's ears would have burned, and how his blood would have sung with pride to have heard himself called dangerous by the president of the Northeastern! He who, during all the valuable years of his services, had never had a sign that that potentate was cognizant of his humble existence.

The Honourable Brush Bascom, as we know, was a clever man; and although it had never been given him to improve on the "Book of Arguments," he had ideas of his own. On reading Mr. Crewe's defiance that morning, he had, with characteristic promptitude and a desire to be useful, taken the first train out of Putnam for Ripton, to range himself by the side of the Honourable Hilary in the hour of need. The Feudal System anticipates, and Mr. Bascom did not wait for a telegram.

On the arrival of the chief counsel from Fairview other captains had put in an appearance, but Mr. Bascom alone was summoned, by a nod, into the private office. What passed between them seems too sacred to write about. The Honourable Hilary would take one of the slips from the packet and give it to Mr. Bascom.

"If that were recommended, editorially, to the *Hull Mercury*, it might serve to clear away certain misconceptions in that section."

"Certain," Mr. Bascom would reply.

"It has been thought wise," the Honourable Hilary continued, "to send an annual to the *Groveton News*. Roberts, his name is. Suppose you recommend to Mr. Roberts that an editorial on this subject would be timely."

Slip number two. Mr. Bascom marks it *Roberts*. Subject: "What would the State do without the Railroad?"

"And Grenville, being a Prohibition centre, you might get this worked up for the *Advertiser* there."

Mr. Bascom's agate eyes are full of light as he takes slip number three. Subject: "Mr. Humphrey Crewe has the best-stocked wine cellar in the State, and champagne every night for dinner." Slip number four, taken direct from the second chapter of the "Book of Arguments:" "Mr. Crewe is a reformer because he has been disappointed in his inordinate ambitions," etc. Slip number five: "Mr. Crewe is a summer resident, with a house in New York," etc., etc. Slip number six, "Book of Arguments," paragraph 1, chapter 1: "Humphrey Crewe, Defamer of our State." Assigned, among others, to the *Ripton Record*.

"Paul Pardriff went up to Leith to-day," said Mr. Bascom.

"Go to see him," replied the Honourable Hilary. "I've been thinking for some time that the advertising in the *Ripton Record* deserves an additional annual."

Mr. Bascom, having been despatched on this business, and having voluntarily assumed control of the Empire Bureau of Publication, the chief counsel transacted other necessary legal business with State Senator Billings and other gentlemen who were waiting. At three o'clock word was sent in that Mr. Austen Vane was outside, and wished to speak with his father as soon as the latter was at leisure. Whereupon the Honourable Hilary shooed out

the minor clients, leaned back in his chair, and commanded that his son be admitted.

"Judge," said Austen, as he closed the door behind him, "I don't want to bother you."

The Honourable Hilary regarded his son for a moment fixedly out of his little eyes.

"Humph!" he said.

Austen looked down at his father. The Honourable Hilary's expression was not one which would have aroused, in the ordinary man who beheld him, a feeling of sympathy or compassion: it was the impenetrable look with which he had faced his opponents for many years. But Austen felt compassion.

"Perhaps I'd better come in another time—when you are less busy," he suggested.

"Who said I was busy?" inquired the Honourable Hilary.

Austen smiled a little sadly. One would have thought, by that smile, that the son was the older and wiser of the two.

"I didn't mean to cast any reflection on your habitual industry, Judge," he said.

"Humph!" exclaimed Mr. Vane. "I've got more to do than sit in the window and read poetry, if that's what you mean."

"You never learned how to enjoy life, did you, Judge?" he said. "I don't believe you ever really had a good time. Own up."

"I've had sterner things to think about. I've had to earn my living—and give you a good time."

"I appreciate it," said Austen.

"Humph! Sometimes I think you don't show it a great deal," the Honourable Hilary answered.

"I show it as far as I can, Judge," said his son. "I can't help the way I was made."

"I try to take account of that," said the Honourable Hilary.

Austen laughed.

"I'll drop in to-morrow morning," he said.

But the Honourable Hilary pointed to a chair on the other side of the desk.

"Sit down. To-day's as good as to-morrow," he remarked, with sententious significance, characteristically throwing the burden of explanation on the visitor.

Austen found the opening unexpectedly difficult. He felt that this was a crisis in their relations, and that it had come at an unfortunate hour.

"Judge," he said, trying to control the feeling that threatened to creep into his voice, "we have jogged along for some years pretty peaceably, and I hope you won't misunderstand what I'm going to say."

The Honourable Hilary grunted.

"It was at your request that I went into the law. I have learned to like that profession. I have stuck to it as well as my wandering, Bohemian nature will permit, and while I do not expect you necessarily to feel any pride in such progress as I have made, I have hoped—that you might feel an interest."

The Honourable Hilary grunted again.

"I suppose I am by nature a free-lance," Austen continued. "You were good enough to acknowledge the force of my argument when I told you it would be best for me to strike out for myself. And I suppose it was inevitable, such being the case, and you the chief counsel for the Northeastern Railroads, that I should at some time or another be called upon to bring suits against your client."

It would have been better, perhaps, if I had not started to practise in this State. I did so from what I believe was a desire common to both of us to—to live together."

The Honourable Hilary reached for his Honey Dew, but he did not speak.

"To live together," Austen repeated. "I want to say that, if I had gone away, I believe I should always have regretted the fact." He paused, and took from his pocket a slip of paper. "I made up my mind from the start that I would always be frank with you. In spite of my desire to amass riches, there are some suits against the Northeastern which I have—somewhat quixotically—refused. Here is a section of the act which permitted the consolidation of the Northeastern Railroads. You are no doubt aware of its existence."

The Honourable Hilary took the slip of paper in his hand and stared at it. "*The rates for fares and freights existing at the time of the passage of this act shall not be increased on the roads leased or united under it.*" What his sensations were when he read it no man might have read in his face, but his hand trembled a little, and a long silence ensued before he gave it back to his son with the simple comment:—

"Well?"

"I do not wish to be understood to ask your legal opinion, although you probably know that lumber rates have been steadily raised, and if a suit under that section were successful the Gaylord Lumber Company could recover a very large sum of money from the Northeastern Railroads," said Austen. "Having discovered the section, I believe it to be my duty to call it to the attention of the Gaylords. What I wish to know is, whether my taking

the case would cause you any personal inconvenience or distress? If so, I will refuse it."

"No," answered the Honourable Hilary, "it won't. Bring suit. Much use it'll be. Do you expect they can recover under that section?"

"I think it is worth trying," said Austen.

"Why didn't somebody try it before?" asked the Honourable Hilary.

"See here, Judge, I wish you'd let me out of an argument about it. Suit is going to be brought, whether I bring it or another man. If you would prefer for any reason that I shouldn't bring it—I won't. I'd much rather resign as counsel for the Gaylords—and I am prepared to do so."

"Bring suit," answered the Honourable Hilary, quickly, "bring suit by all means. And now's your time. This seems to be a popular season for attacking the property which is the foundation of the State's prosperity." ("Book of Arguments," chapter 3.)

In spite of himself, Austen smiled again. Long habit had accustomed Hilary Vane to put business considerations before family ties; and this habit had been the secret of his particular success. And now, rather than admit by the least sign the importance of his son's discovery of the statute (which he had had in mind for many years, and to which he had more than once, by the way, called Mr. Flint's attention), the Honourable Hilary deliberately belittled the matter as part and parcel of the political tactics against the Northeastern.

Scars caused by differences of opinion are soon healed; words count for nothing, and it is the soul that attracts or repels. Mr. Vane was not analytical, he had been through a harassing day, and he was unaware that it was not

Austen's opposition, but Austen's smile, which set the torch to his anger. Once, shortly after his marriage, when he had come home in wrath after a protracted quarrel with Mr. Tredway over the orthodoxy of the new minister, in the middle of his indignant recital of Mr. Tredway's unwarranted attitude, Sarah Austen had smiled. The smile had had in it, to be sure, nothing of conscious superiority, but it had been utterly inexplicable to Hilary Vane. He had known for the first time what it was to feel murder in the heart, and if he had not rushed out of the room, he was sure he would have strangled her. After all, the Hilary Vanes of this world cannot reasonably be expected to perceive the humour in their endeavours.

Now the son's smile seemed the reincarnation of the mother's. That smile was in itself a refutation of motive on Austen's part which no words could have made more emphatic; it had in it (unconsciously, too) compassion for and understanding of the Honourable Hilary's mood and limitations. Out of the corner of his mental vision—without grasping it—the Honourable Hilary perceived this vaguely. It was the smile in which a parent privately indulges when a child kicks his toy locomotive because its mechanism is broken. It was the smile of one who, forgetful of the scheme of the firmament and the spinning planets, will not be moved to anger by him who sees but the four sides of a pit.

Hilary Vane grew red around the eyes—a danger signal of the old days.

"Take the suit," he said. "If you don't, I'll make it known all over the State that you started it. I'll tell Mr. Flint to-morrow. Take it, do you hear me? You ask me if I have any pride in you. I answer, yes. I'd like to see what you can do. I've done what I could for you, and

now I wash my hands of you. Go, ruin yourself if you want to. You've always been headed that way, and there's no use trying to stop you. You don't seem to have any notion of decency or order, or any idea of the principle on which this government was based. Attack property—destroy it. So much the better for you and your kind. Join the Humphrey Crewes—you belong with 'em. Give those of us who stand for order and decency as much trouble as you can. Brand us as rascals trying to enrich ourselves with politics, and proclaim yourselves saints nobly striving to get back the rights of the people. If you don't bring that suit, I tell you I'll give you the credit for it—and I mean what I say."

Austen got to his feet. His own expression, curiously enough, had not changed to one of anger. His face had set, but his eyes held the look that seemed still to express compassion, and what he felt was a sorrow that went to the depths of his nature. What he had so long feared—what he knew they had both feared—had come at last.

"Good-bye, Judge," he said.

Hilary Vane stared at him dumbly. His anger had not cooled, his eyes still flamed, but he suddenly found himself bereft of speech. Austen put his hand on his father's shoulder, and looked down silently into his face. But Hilary was stiff as in a rigour, expressionless save for the defiant red in his eye.

"I don't think you meant all that, Judge, and I don't intend to hold it against you."

Still Hilary stared, his lips in the tight line which was the emblem of his character, his body rigid. He saw his son turn and walk to the door, and turn again with his handle on the knob, and Hilary did not move. The door closed, and still he sat there, motionless, expressionless,

Austen was hailed by those in the outer office, but he walked through them as though the place were empty. Rumours sprang up behind him of which he was unconscious; the long-expected quarrel had come; Austen had joined the motley ranks of the rebels under Mr. Crewe. Only the office boy, Jimmy Towle, interrupted the jokes that were flying by repeating, with dogged vehemence, "I tell you it ain't so. Austen kicked Ham downstairs. Ned Johnson saw him." Nor was it on account of this particular deed that Austen was a hero in Jimmy's eyes.

Austen, finding himself in the square, looked at his watch. It was four o'clock. He made his way under the maples to the house in Hanover Street, halted for a moment contemplatively before the familiar classic pillars of its porch, took a key from his pocket, and (unprecedented action!) entered by the front door. Climbing to the attic, he found two valises—one of which he had brought back from Pepper County—and took them to his own room. They held, with a little crowding, most of his possessions, including a photograph of Sarah Austen, which he left on the bureau to the last. Once or twice he paused in his packing to gaze at the face, striving to fathom the fleeting quality of her glance which the photograph had so strangely caught. In that glance nature had stamped her enigma—for Sarah Austen was a child of nature. Hers was the gentle look of wild things—but it was more; it was the understanding of the unwritten law of creation, the law by which the flowers grow, and wither; the law by which the animal springs upon its prey, and, unerring, seeks its mate; the law of the song of the waters, and the song of the morning stars; the law that permits evil and pain and dumb, incomprehensible suffering; the law that floods at sunset the mountain lands with colour and the

soul with light; and the law that rends the branches in the blue storm. Of what avail was anger against it, or the puny rage of man? Hilary Vane, not recognising it, had spent his force upon it, like a hawk against a mountain wall, but Austen looked at his mother's face and understood. In it was not the wisdom of creeds and cities, but the unworldly wisdom which comprehends and condones.

His packing finished, with one last glance at the room Austen went downstairs with his valises and laid them on the doorstep. Then he went to the stable and harnessed Pepper, putting into the buggy his stable blanket and halter and currycomb, and, driving around to the front of the house, hitched the horse at the stone post, and packed the valises in the back of the buggy. After that he walked slowly to the back of the house and looked in at the kitchen window. Euphrasia, her thin arms bare to the elbow, was bending over a wash-tub. He spoke her name, and as she lifted her head a light came into her face which seemed to make her young again. She dried her hands hastily on her apron as she drew towards him. He sprang through the window, and patted her on the back—his usual salutation. And as she raised her eyes to his (those ordinarily sharp eyes of Euphrasia's), they shone with an admiration she had accorded to no other human being since he had come into the world. Terms of endearment she had, characteristically, never used, but she threw her soul into the sounding of his name.

"Off to the hills, Austen? I saw you a-harnessing of Pepper."

"Phrasie," he said, still patting her, "I'm going to the country for awhile."

"To the country?" she repeated.

"To stay on a farm for a sort of vacation."

Her face brightened.

"Goin' to take a real vacation, be you?"

He laughed.

"Oh, I don't have to work very hard, Phrasie. You know I get out a good deal. I just thought—I just thought I'd like to sleep in the country—for awhile."

"Well," answered Euphrasia, "I guess if you've took the notion, you've got to go. It was that way with your mother before you. I've seen her leave the house on a bright Sabbath half an hour before meetin' to be gone the whole day, and Hilary and all the ministers in town couldn't stop her."

"I'll drop in once in awhile to see you, Phrasie. I'll be at Jabe Jenney's."

"Jabe's is not more than three or four miles from Flint's place," Euphrasia remarked.

"I've thought of that," said Austen.

"You'd thought of it!"

Austen coloured.

"The distance is nothing," he said quickly, "with Pepper."

"And you'll come and see me?" asked Euphrasia.

"If you'll do something for me," he said.

"I always do what you want, Austen. You know I'm not able to refuse you."

He laid his hands on her shoulders.

"You'll promise?" he asked.

"I'll promise," said Euphrasia, solemnly.

He was silent for a moment, looking down at her.

"I want you to promise to stay here and take care of the Judge."

Fright crept into her eyes, but his own were smiling, reassuring.

"Take care of him!" she cried, the very mention of Hilary raising the pitch of her voice. "I guess I'll have to. Haven't I took care of him nigh on forty years, and small thanks and recompense I get for it except when you're here. I've wore out my life takin' care of him" (more gently). "What do you mean by makin' me promise such a thing, Austen?"

"Well," said Austen, slowly, "the Judge is worried now. Things are not going as smoothly with him as—as usual."

"Money?" demanded Euphrasia. "He ain't lost money, has he?"

A light began to dance in Austen's eyes in spite of the weight within him.

"Now, Phrasie," he said, lifting her chin a little, "you know you don't care any more about money than I do."

"Lord help me," she exclaimed, "Lord help me if I didn't! And as long as you don't care for it, and no sense can be knocked into your head about it, I hope you'll marry somebody that does know the value of it. If Hilary was to lose what he has now, before it comes rightly to you, he'd ought to be put in jail."

Austen laughed, and shook his head.

"Phrasie, the Lord did you a grave injustice when he didn't make you a man, but I suppose he'll give you a recompense hereafter. No, I believe I am safe in saying that the Judge's securities are still—secure. Not that I really know—or care" (shakes of the head from Euphrasia). "Poor old Judge! Worse things than finance are troubling him now."

"Not a woman!" cried Euphrasia, horror-stricken at

the very thought. "He hasn't took it into his head after all these years—"

"No," said Austen, laughing, "no, no. It's not quite as bad as that, but it's pretty bad."

"In Heaven's name, what is it?" she demanded.

"Reformers," said Austen.

"Reformers?" she repeated. "What might they be?"

"Well," answered Austen, "you might call them a new kind of caterpillar—only they feed on corporations instead of trees."

Euphrasia shook her head vigorously.

"Go 'long," she exclaimed. "When you talk like that I never can follow you, Austen. If Hilary has any worries, I guess he brought 'em on himself. I never knew him to fail."

"Ambitious and designing persons are making trouble for his railroad."

"Well, I never took much stock in that railroad," said Euphrasia, with emphasis. "I never was on it but an engine gave out, and the cars was jammed, and it wasn't less than an hour late. And then they're eternally smashin' folks or runnin' 'em down. You served 'em right when you made 'em pay that Meader man six thousand dollars, and I told Hilary so." She paused, and stared at Austen fixedly as a thought came into her head. "You ain't leavin' him because of this trouble, are you, Austen?"

"Phrasie," he said, "I—I don't want to quarrel with him now. I think it would be easy to quarrel with him."

"You mean him quarrel with you," returned Euphrasia. "I'd like to see him! If he did, it wouldn't take me long to pack up and leave."

"That's just it. I don't want that to happen. And

I've had a longing to go out and pay a little visit to Jabe up in the hills, and drive his colts for him. You see," he said, "I've got a kind of affection for the Judge."

Euphrasia looked at him, and her lips trembled.

"He don't deserve it," she declared, "but I suppose he's your father."

"He can't get out of that," said Austen.

"I'd like to see him try it," said Euphrasia. "Come in soon, Austen," she whispered, "come in soon."

She stood on the lawn and watched him as he drove away, and he waved good-bye to her over the hood of the buggy. When he was out of sight she lifted her head, gave her eyes a vigorous brush with her checked apron, and went back to her washing.

It was not until Euphrasia had supper on the table that Hilary Vane came home, and she glanced at him sharply as he took his usual seat. It is a curious fact that it is possible for two persons to live together for more than a third of a century, and at the end of that time understand each other little better than at the beginning. The sole bond between Euphrasia and Hilary was that of Sarah Austen and her son. Euphrasia never knew when Hilary was tired, or when he was cold, or hungry, or cross, although she provided for all these emergencies. Her service to him was unflagging, but he had never been under the slightest delusion that it was not an inheritance from his wife. There must have been some affection between Mr. Vane and his housekeeper, hidden away in the strong-boxes of both, but up to the present this was only a theory—not quite as probable as that about the inhabitants of Mars.

He ate his supper to-night with his usual appetite, which had always been sparing; and he would have eaten

the same amount if the Northeastern Railroads had been going into the hands of a receiver the next day. Often he did not exchange a word with Euphrasia between home-coming and bed-going, and this was apparently to be one of these occasions. After supper he went, as usual, to sit on the steps of his porch, and to cut his piece of Honey Dew, which never varied a milligram. Nine o'clock struck, and Euphrasia, who had shut up the back of the house, was on her way to bed with her lamp in her hand, when she came face to face with him in the narrow passage-way.

"Where's Austen?" he asked.

Euphrasia halted. The lamp shook, but she raised it to the level of his eyes.

"Don't you know?" she demanded.

"No," he said, with unparalleled humility.

She put down the lamp on the little table that stood beside her.

"He didn't tell you he was a-goin'?"

"No," said Hilary.

"Then how did you know he wasn't just buggy-ridin'?" she said.

Hilary Vane was mute.

"You've be'n to his room!" she exclaimed. "You've seen his things are gone!"

He confessed it by his silence. Then, with amazing swiftness and vigour for one of her age, Euphrasia seized him by the arms and shook him.

"What have you done to him?" she cried; "what have you done to him? You sent him off. You've never understood him—you've never behaved like a father to him. You ain't worthy to have him." She flung herself away and stood facing Hilary at a little distance. "What

a fool I was! What a fool! I might have known it,—and I promised him.”

“Promised him?” Hilary repeated. The shaking, the vehemence and anger, of Euphrasia seemed to have had no effect whatever on the main trend of his thoughts.

“Where has he gone?”

“You can find out for yourself,” she retorted bitterly. “I wish on your account it was to China. He came here this afternoon, as gentle as ever, and packed up his things, and said he was goin’ away because you was worried. Worried!” she exclaimed scornfully. “*His* worry and *his* trouble don’t count—but yours. And he made me promise to stay with you. If it wasn’t for him,” she cried, picking up the lamp, “I’d leave you this very night.

She swept past him, and up the narrow stairway to her bedroom.

CHAPTER II.

BUSY DAYS AT WEDDERBURN.

THERE is no blast so powerful, so withering, as the blast of ridicule. Only the strongest men can withstand it,—only reformers who are such in deed, and not alone in name, can snap their fingers at it, and liken it to the crackling of thorns under a pot. Confucius and Martin Luther must have been ridiculed, Mr. Crewe reflected, and although he did not have time to assure himself on these historical points, the thought stayed him. Sixty odd weekly newspapers, filled with arguments from the Book,

attacked him all at once; and if by chance he should have missed the best part of this flattering personal attention, the editorials which contained the most spice were copied at the end of the week into the columns of his erstwhile friend, the *State Tribune*, now the organ of that mysterious personality, the Honourable Adam B. Hunt. *Et tu, Bruie!*

Moreover, Mr. Peter Pardriff had something of his own to say. Some gentlemen of prominence (not among the twenty signers of the new Declaration of Independence) had been interviewed by the *Tribune* reporter on the subject of Mr. Crewe's candidacy. Here are some of the answers, duly tabulated.

"Negligible."—Congressman Fairplay.

"One less vote for the Honourable Adam B. Hunt."

—The Honourable Jacob Botcher.

"A monumental farce."—Ex-Governor Broadbent.

"Who is Mr. Crewe?"—Senator Whitredge. (Ah ha! Senator, this want shall be supplied, at least.)

"I have been very busy. I do not know what candidates are in the field."—Mr. Augustus P. Flint, president of the Northeastern Railroads. (The unkindest cut of all!)

"I have heard that a Mr. Crewe is a candidate, but I do not know much about him. They tell me he is a summer resident at Leith."—The Honourable Hilary Vane.

"A millionaire's freak—not to be taken seriously."—State Senator Nathaniel Billings.

The *State Tribune* itself seemed to be especially interested in the past careers of the twenty signers. Who composed this dauntless band, whose members had arisen with remarkable unanimity and martyr's zeal in such widely scattered parts of the State? Had each been simulta-

neously inspired with the same high thought, and—more amazing still—with the idea of the same peerless leader? The *Tribune* modestly ventured the theory that Mr. Crewe had appeared to each of the twenty in a dream, with a flaming sword pointing to the steam of the dragon's breath. Or, perhaps, a star had led each of the twenty to Leith. (This likening of Mr. H——n T——g to a star caused much merriment among that gentleman's former friends and acquaintances.) The *Tribune* could not account for this phenomenon by any natural laws, and was forced to believe that the thing was a miracle—in which case it behoved the Northeastern Railroads to read the handwriting on the wall. Unless—unless the twenty did not exist! Unless the whole thing were a joke! The *Tribune* remembered a time when a signed statement, purporting to come from a certain Mrs. Amanda P. Pillow, of 22 Blair Street, Newcastle, had appeared, to the effect that three bottles of Rand's Peach Nectar had cured her of dropsy. On investigation there was no 22 Blair Street, and Mrs. Amanda P. Pillow was as yet unborn. The one sure thing about the statement was that Rand's Peach Nectar could be had, in large or small quantities, as desired. And the *Tribune* was prepared to state, on its own authority, that a Mr. Humphrey Crewe did exist, and might reluctantly consent to take the nomination for the governorship. In industry and zeal he was said to resemble the celebrated and lamented Mr. Rand, of the Peach Nectar.

Ingratitude merely injures those who are capable of it, although it sometimes produces sadness in great souls. What were Mr. Crewe's feelings when he read this drivel? When he perused the extracts from the "Book of Arguments" which appeared (with astonishing unanimity, too!)

in sixty odd weekly newspapers of the State—an assortment of arguments for each county.

"Brush Bascom's doin' that work now," said Mr. Tooting, contemptuously, "and he's doin' it with a shovel. Look here! He's got the same squib in three towns within a dozen miles of each other, the one beginning 'Political conditions in this State are as clean as those of any State in the Union, and the United Northeastern Railroads is a corporation which is, fortunately, above calumny. A summer resident who, to satisfy his lust for office, is willing to defame—'"

"Yes," interrupted Mr. Crewe, "never mind reading any more of that rot."

"It's botched," said Mr. Tooting, whose artistic soul was jarred. "I'd have put that in Avalon County, and Weare, and Marshall. I know men that take all three of those papers in Putnam."

No need of balloonists to see what the enemy is about, when we have a Mr. Tooting.

"They're stung!" he cried, as he ran rapidly through the bundle of papers—Mr. Crewe having subscribed, with characteristic generosity, to the entire press of the State. "Flint gave 'em out all this stuff about the railroad bein' a sacred institution. You've got 'em on the run right now, Mr. Crewe. You'll notice that, Democrats and Republicans, they've dropped everybody else, that they've all been sicked onto you. They're scared."

"I came to that conclusion some time ago," replied Mr. Crewe, who was sorting over his letters.

"And look there!" exclaimed Mr. Tooting, tearing out a paragraph, "there's the best campaign material we've had yet. Say, I'll bet Flint takes that doddering idiot's pass away for writing that."

Mr. Crewe took the extract, and read:—

"A summer resident of Leith, who is said to be a millionaire many times over, and who had a somewhat farcical career as a legislator last winter, has announced himself as a candidate for the Republican nomination on a platform attacking the Northeastern Railroads. Mr. Humphrey Crewe declares that the Northeastern Railroads govern us. What if they do? *Every sober-minded citizen will agree that they give us a pretty good government.* More power to them."

Mr. Crewe permitted himself to smile.

"They *are* playing into our hands, sure enough. What?"

This is an example of the spirit in which the ridicule and abuse was met.

It was Senator Whitredge—only last autumn so pleased to meet Mr. Crewe at Mr. Flint's—who asked the hypocritical question, "Who is Humphrey Crewe?" A biography (in pamphlet form, illustrated,—send your name and address) is being prepared by the invaluable Mr. Tooting, who only sleeps six hours these days. We shall see it presently, when it emerges from that busy hive at Wedderburn.

Wedderburn was a hive, sure enough. Not having a balloon ourselves, it is difficult to see all that is going on there; but there can be no mistake (except by the Honourable Hilary's seismograph) that it has become the centre of extraordinary activity. The outside world has paused to draw breath at the spectacle, and members of the metropolitan press are filling the rooms of the Ripton House and adding to the prosperity of its livery-stable. Mr. Crewe is a difficult man to see these days—there are so many visitors at Wedderburn, and the representatives of the

metropolitan press hitch their horses and stroll around the grounds, or sit on the porch and converse with gentlemen from various counties of the State who (as the *Tribune* would put it) have been led by a star to Leith.

On the occasion of one of these gatherings, when Mr. Crewe had been inaccessible for four hours, Mrs. Pomfret drove up in a victoria with her daughter Alice.

"I'm sure I don't know when we're going to see poor dear Humphrey again," said Mrs. Pomfret, examining the group on the porch through her gold-mounted lenses; "these awful people are always here when I come. I wonder if they sleep here, in the hammocks and lounging chairs! Alice, we must be very polite to them—so much depends on it."

"I'm always polite, mother," answered Alice, "except when you tell me not to be. The trouble is I never know myself."

The victoria stopped in front of the door, and the irreproachable Waters advanced across the porch.

"Waters," said Mrs. Pomfret, "I suppose Mr. Crewe is too busy to come out."

"I'm afraid so, madam," replied Waters; "there's a line of gentlemen waitin' here" (he eyed them with no uncertain disapproval), "and I've positive orders not to disturb him, madam."

"I quite understand, at a time like this," said Mrs. Pomfret, and added, for the benefit of her audience, "when Mr. Crewe has been public-spirited and unselfish enough to undertake such a gigantic task. Tell him Miss Pomfret and I call from time to time because we are so interested, and that the whole of Leith wishes him success."

"I'll tell him, madam," said Waters,

But Mrs. Pomfret did not give the signal for her coachman to drive on. She looked, instead, at the patient gathering.

"Good morning, gentlemen," she said.

"Mother!" whispered Alice, "what are you going to do?"

The gentlemen rose.

"I'm Mrs. Pomfret," she said, as though that simple announcement were quite sufficient,—as it was, for the metropolitan press. Not a man of them who had not seen Mrs. Pomfret's important movements on both sides of the water chronicled. "I take the liberty of speaking to you, as we all seem to be united in a common cause. How is the campaign looking?"

Some of the gentlemen shifted their cigars from one hand to the other, and grinned sheepishly.

"I am *so* interested," continued Mrs. Pomfret; "it is so unusual in America for a gentleman to be willing to undertake such a thing, to subject himself to low criticism, and to have his pure motives questioned. Mr. Crewe has rare courage—I have always said so. And we are all going to put our shoulder to the wheel, and help him all we can."

There was one clever man there who was quick to see his opportunity, and seize it for his newspaper.

"And are you going to help Mr. Crewe in his campaign, Mrs. Pomfret?"

"Most assuredly," answered Mrs. Pomfret. "Women in this country could do so much if they only would. You know," she added, in her most winning manner, "you know that a woman can often get a vote when a man can't."

"And you, and—other ladies will go around to the public meetings?"

"Why not, my friend, if Mr. Crewe has no objection? and I can conceive of none."

"You would have an organisation of society ladies to help Mr. Crewe?"

"That's rather a crude way of putting it," answered Mrs. Pomfret, with her glasses raised judiciously. "Women in what you call 'society' are, I am glad to say, taking an increasing interest in politics. They are beginning to realise that it is a duty."

"Thank you," said the reporter; "and now would you mind if I took a photograph of you in your carriage?"

"Oh, mother," protested Alice, "you won't let him do that!"

"Be quiet, Alice. Lady Aylestone and the duchess are photographed in every conceivable pose for political purposes. Wymans, just drive around to the other side of the circle."

The article appeared next day, and gave, as may be imagined, a tremendous impetus to Mr. Crewe's cause. "*A new era in American politics!*" "*Society to take a hand in the gubernatorial campaign of Millionaire Humphrey Crewe!*" "*Noted social leader, Mrs. Patterson Pomfret, declares it a duty, and says that English women have the right idea.*" And a photograph of Mrs. Patterson Pomfret herself, in her victoria, occupied a generous portion of the front page.

"What's all this rubbish about Mrs. Pomfret?" was Mr. Crewe's grateful comment when he saw it. "I spent two valuable hours with that reporter givin' him material and statistics, and I can't find that he's used a word of it."

"Never you mind about that," Mr. Tooting replied. "The more advertising you get, the better, and this

shows that the right people are behind you. Mrs. Pomfret's a smart woman, all right. She knows her job. And here's more advertising," he continued, shoving another sheet across the desk, "a fine likeness of you in caricature labelled, 'Ajax' defying the Lightning.' Who's Ajax? There was an Italian, a street contractor, with that name—or something like it—in Newcastle a couple of years ago—in the eighth ward."

In these days, when false rumours fly apace to the injury of innocent men, it is well to get at the truth, if possible. It is not true that Mr. Paul Pardriff, of the *Ripton Record*, has been to Wedderburn. Mr. Pardriff was getting into a buggy to go—somewhere—when he chanced to meet the Honourable Brush Bascom, and the buggy was sent back to the livery-stable. Mr. Tooting had been to see Mr. Pardriff before the world-quaking announcement of June 7th, and had found Mr. Pardriff a reformer who did not believe that the railroad should run the State. But the editor of the *Ripton Record* was a man after Emerson's own heart: "a foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds"—and Mr. Pardriff did not go to Wedderburn. He went off on an excursion up the State instead, for he had been working too hard; and he returned, as many men do from their travels, a conservative. He listened coldly to Mr. Tooting's impassioned pleas for cleaner politics, until Mr. Tooting revealed the fact that his pockets were full of copy. It seems that a biography was to be printed—a biography which would, undoubtedly, be in great demand; the biography of a public benefactor, illustrated with original photographs and views in the country. Mr. Tooting and Mr. Pardriff both being men of the world, some exceeding plain talk ensued between them, and when two such minds unite,

a way out is sure to be found. One can be both a conservative and a radical—if one is clever. There were other columns in Mr. Pardriff's paper besides editorial columns; editorial columns, Mr. Pardriff said, were sacred to his convictions. Certain thumb-worn schedules were referred to. Paul Pardriff, Ripton, agreed to be the publisher of the biography.

The next edition of the *Record* was an example of what Mr. Emerson meant. Three columns contained extracts of absorbing interest from the forthcoming biography and, on another page, an editorial. "The Honourable Humphrey Crewe, of Leith, is an estimable gentleman and a good citizen, whose public endeavours have been of great benefit to the community. A citizen of Avalon County, the *Record* regrets that it cannot support his candidacy for the Republican gubernatorial nomination. We are not among those who seek to impugn motives, and while giving Mr. Crewe every credit that his charges against the Northeastern Railroads are made in good faith, we beg to differ from him. That corporation is an institution which has stood the test of time, and enriches every year the State treasury by a large sum in taxes. Its management is in safe, conservative hands. No one will deny Mr. Crewe's zeal for the State's welfare, but it must be borne in mind that he is a newcomer in politics, and that conditions, seen from the surface, are sometimes deceptive. We predict for Mr. Crewe a long and useful career, but we do not think that at this time, and on this platform, he will obtain the governorship."

"Moral courage is what the age needs," had been Mr. Crewe's true and sententious remark when he read this editorial. But, bearing in mind a biblical adage, he did

not blame Mr. Tooting for his diplomacy. "Send in the next man."

Mr. Tooting opened the study door and glanced over the public-spirited citizens awaiting, on the porch, the pleasure of their leader.

"Come along, Caldwell," said Mr. Tooting. "He wants your report from Kingston. Get a hustle on!"

Mr. Caldwell made his report, received many brief and businesslike suggestions, and retired, impressed. Whereupon Mr. Crewe commanded Mr. Tooting to order his automobile—an occasional and rapid spin over the country roads being the only diversion the candidate permitted himself. Wishing to be alone with his thoughts, he did not take Mr. Tooting with him on these excursions.

"And by the way," said Mr. Crewe, as he seized the steering wheel a few moments later, "just drop a line to Austen Vanë, will you, and tell him I want to see him up here within a day or two. Make an appointment. It has occurred to me that he might be very useful."

Mr. Tooting stood on the driveway watching the cloud of dust settle on the road below. Then he indulged in a long and peculiarly significant whistle through his teeth, rolled his eyes heavenward, and went into the house. He remembered Austen's remark about riding a cyclone.

Mr. Crewe took the Tunbridge road. On his excursion of the day before he had met Mrs. Pomfret, who had held up her hand, and he had protestingly brought the car to a stop.

"Your horses don't frighten," he had said.

"No, but I wanted to speak to you, Humphrey," Mrs. Pomfret had replied; "you are becoming so important that nobody ever has a glimpse of you. I wanted to tell

you what an interest we take in this splendid thing you are doing."

"Well," said Mr. Crewe, "it was a plain duty, and nobody else seemed willing to undertake it."

Mrs. Pomfret's eyes had flashed.

"Men of that type are scarce," she answered. "But you'll win. You're the kind of man that wins."

"Oh, yes, I'll win," said Mr. Crewe.

"You're so magnificently sure of yourself," cried Mrs. Pomfret. "Alice is taking *such* an interest. Every day she asks, 'When is Humphrey going to make his first speech?' You'll let us know in time, won't you?"

"Did you put all that nonsense in the New York *Flare*?" asked Mr. Crewe.

"Oh, Humphrey, I hope you liked it," cried Mrs. Pomfret. "Don't make the mistake of despising what women can do. They elected the Honourable Billy Aylestone—he said so himself. I'm getting all the women interested."

"Who've you been calling on now?" he inquired.

Mrs. Pomfret hesitated.

"I've been up at Fairview to see about Mrs. Flint. She isn't much better."

"Is Victoria home?" Mr. Crewe demanded, with undisguised interest.

"Poor dear girl!" said Mrs. Pomfret, "of course I wouldn't have mentioned the subject to her, but she wanted to know all about it. It naturally makes an awkward situation between you and her, doesn't it?"

"Oh, Victoria's level-headed enough," Mr. Crewe had answered; "I guess she knows something about old Flint and his methods by this time. At any rate, it won't make any difference with me," he added magnanimously, and

threw in his clutch. He had encircled Fairview in his drive that day, and was, curiously enough, headed in that direction now. Slow to make up his mind in some things, as every eligible man must be, he was now coming rapidly to the notion that he might eventually decide upon Victoria as the most fitting mate for one in his position. Still, there was no hurry. As for going to Fairview House, that might be awkward, besides being open to misconception by his constituents. Mr. Crewe reflected, as he rushed up the hills, that he had missed Victoria since she had been abroad—and a man so continually occupied as he did not have time to miss many people. Mr. Crewe made up his mind he would encircle Fairview every day until he ran across her.

The goddess of fortune sometimes blesses the persistent even before they begin to persist—perhaps from sheer weariness at the remembrance of previous importuning. Victoria, on a brand-new and somewhat sensitive five-year-old, was coming out of the stone archway when Mr. Crewe (without any signal this time!) threw on his brakes. An exhibition of horsemanship followed, on Victoria's part, which Mr. Crewe beheld with admiration. The five-year-old swung about like a weathercock in a gust of wind, assuming an upright position, like the unicorn in the British coat of arms. Victoria cut him, and he came down on all fours and danced into the wire fence that encircled the Fairview domain, whereupon he got another stinging reminder that there was someone on his back.

"Bravo!" cried Mr. Crewe, leaning on the steering wheel and watching the performance with delight. Never, he thought, had Victoria been more appealing; strangely enough, he had not remembered that she was quite so handsome, or that her colour was so vivid; or that her

body was so straight and long and supple. He liked the way in which she gave it to that horse, and he made up his mind that she would grace any position, however high. Presently the horse made a leap into the road in front of the motor and stood trembling, ready to bolt.

"For Heaven's sake, Humphrey," she cried, "shut off your power! Don't sit there like an idiot—do you think I'm doing this for pleasure?"

Mr. Crewe good-naturedly turned off his switch, and the motor, with a dying sigh, was silent. He even liked the notion of being commanded to do a thing; there was a relish about it that was new. The other women of his acquaintance addressed him more deferentially.

"Get hold of the bridle," he said to the chauffeur. "You've got no business to have an animal like that," was his remark to Victoria.

"Don't touch him!" she said to the man, who was approaching with a true machinist's fear of a high-spirited horse. "*You've* got no business to have a motor like that, if you can't handle it any better than you do."

"You managed him all right. I'll say that for you," said Mr. Crewe.

"No thanks to you," she replied. Now that the horse was comparatively quiet, she sat and regarded Mr. Crewe with an amusement which was gradually getting the better of her anger. A few moments since, and she wished with great intensity that she had been using the whip on his shoulders instead. Now that she had time to gather up the threads of the situation, the irresistibly comic aspect of it grew upon her, and little creases came into the corners of her eyes—which Mr. Crewe admired. She recalled—with indignation, to be

sure—the conversation she had overheard in the dining-room of the Duncan house, but her indignation was particularly directed, on that occasion, towards Mr. Tooting. Here was Humphrey Crewe, sitting talking to her in the road—Humphrey Crewe, whose candidacy for the governorship impugned her father's management of the North-eastern Railroads—and she was unable to take the matter seriously! There must be something wrong with her, she thought.

"So you're home again," Mr. Crewe observed, his eyes still bearing witness to the indubitable fact. "I shouldn't have known it—I've been so busy."

"Is the Legislature still in session?" Victoria soberly inquired.

"You are a little behind the times—ain't you?" said Mr. Crewe, in surprise. "How long have you been home? Hasn't anybody told you what's going on?"

"I only came up ten days ago," she answered, "and I'm afraid I've been something of a recluse. What is going on?"

"Well," he declared, "I should have thought *you'd* heard it, anyway. I'll send you up a few newspapers when I get back. I'm a candidate for the governorship."

Victoria bit her lip, and leaned over to brush a fly from the neck of her horse.

"You are getting on rapidly, Humphrey," she said. "Do you think you've got—any chance?"

"Any chance!" he repeated, with some pardonable force. "I'm sure to be nominated. There's an overwhelming sentiment among the voters of this State for decent politics. It didn't take me long to find that out. The only wonder is that somebody hasn't seen it before."

"Perhaps," she answered, giving him a steady look, "perhaps somebody has."

One of Mr. Crewe's greatest elements of strength was his imperviousness to this kind of a remark.

"If anybody's seen it," he replied, "they haven't the courage of their convictions." Such were the workings of Mr. Crewe's mind that he had already forgotten that first talk with Mr. Hamilton Tooting. "Nor that I want to take too much credit on myself," he added, with becoming modesty. "I have had some experience in the world, and it was natural that I should get a fresh view. Are you coming down to Leith in a few days?"

"I may," said Victoria.

"Telephone me," said Crewe, "and if I can get off, I will. I'd like to talk to you. You have more sense than most women I know."

"You overwhelm me, Humphrey. Compliments sound strangely on your lips."

"When I say a thing, I mean it," Mr. Crewe declared. "I don't pay compliments. I'd make it a point to take a little time off to talk to you. You see, so many men are interested in this thing from various parts of the State, and we are so busy organising, that it absorbs most of my day."

"I couldn't think of encroaching," Victoria protested.

"That's all right—you can be a great help. I've got confidence in your judgment. By the way," he asked suddenly, "you haven't seen your friend Austen Vane since you got back, have you?"

"Why do you call him my friend?" said Victoria. Mr. Crewe perceived that the exercise had heightened her colour, and the transition appealed to his sense of beauty.

"Perhaps I put it a little strongly," he replied. "You

seemed to take an interest in him, for some reason. I suppose it's because you like new types."

"I like Mr. Vane very much,—and for himself," she said quietly. "But I haven't seen him since I came back. Nor do I think I am likely to see him. What made you ask about him?"

"Well, he seems to be a man of some local standing, and he ought to be in this campaign. If you happen to see him, you might mention the subject to him. I've sent for him to come up and see me."

"Mr. Vane doesn't seem to me to be a person one can send for like that," Victoria remarked judicially. "As to advising him as to what course he should take politically—that would even be straining my friendship for you, Humphrey. On reflection," she added, smiling, "there may appear to you reasons why I should not care to meddle with—politics, just now."

"I can't see it," said Mr. Crewe; "you've got a mind of your own, and you've never been afraid to use it, so far as I know. If you *should* see that Vane man, just give him a notion of what I'm trying to do."

"What are you trying to do?" inquired Victoria, sweetly.

"I'm trying to clean up this State politically," said Mr. Crewe, "and I'm going to do it. When you come down to Leith, I'll tell you about it, and I'll send you the newspapers to-day. Don't be in a hurry," he cried, addressing over his shoulder two farmers in a waggon who had driven up a few moments before, and who were apparently anxious to pass. "Wind her up, Adolphe."

The chauffeur, standing by the crank, started the engine instantly, and the gears screamed as Mr. Crewe threw in his low speed. The five-year-old whirled, and

bolted down the road at a pace which would have seemed to challenge a racing car; and the girl in the saddle, bending to the motion of the horse, was seen to raise her hand in warning.

"Better stay whar you be," shouted one of the farmers; "don't go to follerin' her. The hoss is runnin' away."

Mr. Crewe steered his car into the Fairview entrance, and backed into the road again, facing the other way. He had decided to go home.

"That lady can take care of herself," he said, and started off towards Leith, wondering how it was that Mr. Flint had not confided his recent political troubles to his daughter.

"That hoss is ugly, sure enough," said the farmer who had spoken before.

Victoria flew on, down the narrow road. After twenty strides she did not attempt to disguise from herself the fact that the five-year-old was in a frenzy of fear, and running away. Victoria had been run away with before, and having some knowledge of the animal she rode, she did not waste her strength by pulling on the curb, but sought rather to quiet him with her voice,—which had no effect whatever. He was beyond appeal, his head was down, and his ears trembling backwards and straining for a sound of the terror that pursued him. The road ran through the forest, and Victoria reflected that the grade, on the whole, was downward to the East Tunbridge station, where the road crossed the track and took to the hills beyond. Once among them, she would be safe—he might run as far as he pleased. But could she pass the station? She held a firm rein, and tried to keep her mind clear.

Suddenly, at a slight bend of the road, the corner of

the little red building came in sight, some hundreds of yards ahead; and, on the side where it stood, in the clearing, was a white mass which Victoria recognised as a pile of lumber. She saw several men on the top of the pile, standing motionless; she heard one of them shout; the horse swerved, and she felt herself flung violently to the left.

Her first thought, after striking, was one of self-congratulation that her safety stirrup and habit had behaved properly. Before she could rise, a man was leaning over her—and in the instant she had the impression that he was a friend. Other people had had this impression of him on first acquaintance—his size, his genial, brick-red face, and his honest blue eyes all doubtless contributing.

"Are you hurt, Miss Flint?" he asked.

"Not in the least," she replied, springing to her feet to prove the contrary. "What's become of my horse?"

"Two of the men have gone after him," he said, staring at her with undisguised but honest admiration. Whereupon he became suddenly embarrassed, and pulled out a handkerchief the size of a table-napkin. "Let me dust you off."

"Thank you," said Victoria, laughing, and beginning the process herself. Her new acquaintance plied the handkerchief, his face a brighter brick-red than ever.

"Thank God, there wasn't a freight on the siding," he remarked, so fervently that Victoria stole a glance at him. The dusting process continued.

"There," she exclaimed, at last, adjusting her stock and shaking her skirt, "I'm ever so much obliged. It was very foolish in me to tumble off, wasn't it?"

"It was the only thing you could have done," he declared. "I had a good view of it, and he flung you like

a bean out of a shooter. That's a powerful horse. I guess you're the kind that likes to take risks."

Victoria laughed at his expressive phrase, and crossed the road, and sat down on the edge of the lumber pile, in the shade.

"There seems to be nothing to do but wait," she said, "and to thank you again. Will you tell me your name?"

"I'm Tom Gaylord," he replied.

Her colour, always so near the surface, rose a little as she regarded him. So this was Austen Vane's particular friend, whom he had tried to put out of his window. A Herculean task, Victoria thought, from Tom's appearance. Tom sat down within a few feet of her.

"I've seen you a good many times, Miss Flint," he remarked, applying the handkerchief to his face.

"And I've seen you—once, Mr. Gaylord," some mischievous impulse prompted her to answer. Perhaps the impulse was more deep-seated, after all.

"Where?" demanded Tom, promptly.

"You were engaged," said Victoria, "in a struggle in a window on Ripton Square. It looked, for a time," she continued, "as if you were going to be dropped on the roof of the porch."

Tom gazed at her in confusion and surprise.

"You seem to be fond, too, of dangerous exercise," she observed.

"Do you mean to say you remembered me from that?" he exclaimed. "Oh, you know Austen Vane, don't you?"

"Does Mr. Vane acknowledge the acquaintance?" Victoria inquired.

"It's funny, but you remind me of Austen," said Tom, grinning; "you seem to have the same queer way of say-

9780.

ing things that he has." Here he was conscious of another fit of embarrassment. "I hope you don't mind what I say, Miss Flint."

"Not at all," said Victoria. She turned, and looked across the track.

"I suppose they are having a lot of trouble in catching my horse," she remarked.

"They'll get him," Tom assured her, "one of those men is my manager. He always gets what he starts out for. What were we talking about? Oh, Austen Vane. You see, I've known him ever since I was a shaver, and I think the world of him. If he asked me to go to South America and get him a zebra to-morrow, I believe I'd do it."

"That is real devotion," said Victoria. The more she saw of young Tom, the better she liked him, although his conversation was apt to be slightly embarrassing.

"We've been through a lot of rows together," Tom continued, warming to his subject, "in school and college. You see, Austen's the kind of man who doesn't care what anybody thinks, if he takes it into his head to do a thing. It was a great piece of luck for me that he shot that fellow out West, or he wouldn't be here now. You heard about that, didn't you?"

"Yes," said Victoria, "I believe I did."

"And yet," said Tom, "although I'm as good a friend as he has, I never quite got under his skin. There's some things I wouldn't talk to him about. I've learned that. I never told him, for instance, that I saw him out in a sleigh with you at the capital."

"Oh," said Victoria; and she added, "Is he ashamed of it?"

"It's not that," replied Tom, hastily, "but I guess

if he'd wanted me to know about it, he'd have told me."

Victoria had begun to realise that, in the few minutes which had elapsed since she had found herself on the road-side, gazing up into young Tom's eyes, she had somehow become quite intimate with him.

"I fancy he would have told you all there was to tell about it—if the matter had occurred to him again," she said, with the air of finally dismissing a subject already too prolonged. But Tom knew nothing of the shades and conventions of the art of conversation.

"He's never told me he knew you at all!" he exclaimed, staring at Victoria. Apparently some of the aspects of this now significant omission on Austen's part were beginning to dawn on Tom.

"It wasn't worth mentioning," said Victoria, briefly, seeking for a pretext to change the subject.

"I don't believe that," said Tom, "you can't expect me to sit here and look at you and believe that. How long has he known you?"

"I saw him once or twice last summer, at Leith," said Victoria, now wavering between laughter and exasperation. She had got herself into a quandary indeed when she had to parry the appalling frankness of such inquiries.

"The more you see of him, the more you'll admire him, I'll prophesy," said Tom. "If he'd been content to travel along the easy road, as most fellows are, he would have been counsel for the Northeastern. Instead of that—" here Tom halted abruptly, and turned scarlet. "I forgot," he said, "I'm always putting my foot in it, with ladies."

He was so painfully confused that Victoria felt herself suffering with him, and longed to comfort him.

"Please go on, Mr. Gaylord," she said; "I am very much interested in my neighbours here, and I know that a great many of them think that the railroad meddles in politics. I've tried to find out what they think, but it is so difficult for a woman to understand. If matters are wrong, I'm sure my father will right them when he knows the situation. He has so much to attend to." She paused. Tom was still mopping his forehead. "You may say anything you like to me, and I shall not take offence."

Tom's admiration of her was heightened by this attitude.

"Austen wouldn't join Mr. Crewe in his little game, anyway," he said. "When Ham Tooting, Crewe's manager, came to him he kicked him downstairs."

Victoria burst out laughing.

"I constantly hear of these ferocious deeds which Mr. Vane commits," she said, "and yet he seems exceptionally good-natured and mild-mannered."

"That's straight—he kicked him downstairs. Served Tooting right, too."

"There does seem to have been an element of justice in it," Victoria remarked.

"You haven't seen Austen since he left his father?" Mr. Gaylord inquired.

"Left him! Where—has he gone?"

"Gone up to live with Jabe Jenney. If Austen cared anything about money, he never would have broken with the old man, who has some little put away."

"Why did he leave his father?" asked Victoria, not taking the trouble now to conceal her interest.

"Well," said Tom, "you know they never did get along. It hasn't been Austen's fault—he's tried. After he came back from the West he stayed here to please old

Hilary, when he might have gone to New York and made a fortune at the law, with his brains. But after Austen saw the kind of law the old man practised he wouldn't stand for it, and got an office of his own."

Victoria's eyes grew serious.

"What kind of law does Hilary Vane practise?" she asked.

Tom hesitated and began to mop his forehead again.

"Please don't mind me," Victoria pleaded.

"Well, all right," said Tom, "I'll tell *you* the truth, or die for it. But I don't want to make you—unhappy."

"You will do me a kindness, Mr. Gaylord," she said, "by telling me what you believe to be true."

There was a note in her voice which young Tom did not understand. Afterwards, when he reflected about the matter, he wondered if she were unhappy.

"I don't want to blame Hilary too much," he answered.

"I know Austen don't. Hilary's grown up with that way of doing things, and in the old days there was no other way. Hilary is the chief counsel for the Northeastern, and he runs the Republican organisation in this State for their benefit. But Austen made up his mind that there was no reason why *he* should grow up that way. He says that a lawyer should keep to his profession, and not become a lobbyist in the interest of his clients. He lived with the old man until the other day, because he has a real soft spot for him. Austen put up with a good deal. And then Hilary turned loose on him and said a lot of things he couldn't stand. Austen didn't answer, but went up and packed his bags and made Hilary's housekeeper promise to stay with him, or she'd have left, too. They say Hilary's sorry, now. He's fond of Austen, but he can't get along with him."

"Do you know what they quarrelled about?" asked Victoria, in a low voice.

"This spring," said Tom, "the Gaylord Lumber Company made Austen junior counsel. He ran across a law the other day that nobody else seems to have had sense enough to discover, by which we can sue the railroad for excessive freight rates. It means a lot of money. He went right in to Hilary and showed him the section, told him that suit was going to be brought, and offered to resign. Hilary flew off the track and said if he didn't bring suit he'd publish it all over the State that Austen started it. Galusha Hammer, our senior counsel, is sick, and I don't think he'll ever get well. That makes Austen senior counsel. But he persuaded old Tom, my father, not to bring this suit until after the political campaign, until Mr. Crewe gets through with his fireworks. Hilary doesn't know that."

"I see," said Victoria.

Down the hill, on the far side of the track, she perceived the two men approaching with a horse; then she remembered the fact that she had been thrown, and that it was her horse. She rose to her feet.

"I'm ever so much obliged to you, Mr. Gaylord," she said; "you have done me a great favour by—telling me these things. And thanks for letting them catch the horse. I'm afraid I've put you to a lot of bother."

"Not at all," said Tom, "not at all." He was studying her face. Its expression troubled and moved him strangely, for he was not an analytical person. "I didn't mean to tell you those things when I began," he apologised, "but you wanted to hear them."

"I wanted to hear them," repeated Victoria. She held out her hand to him.

"You're not going to ride home!" he exclaimed. "I'll take you up in my buggy—it's in the station shed."

She smiled, turned and questioned and thanked the men, examined the girths and bridle, and stroked the five-year-old on the neck. He was wet from mane to fetlocks.

"I don't think he'll care to run much farther," she said. "If you'll pull him over to the lumber pile, Mr. Gaylord, I'll mount him."

They performed her bidding in silence, each paying her a tribute in his thoughts. As for the five-year-old, he was quiet enough by this time. When she was in the saddle she held out her hand once more to Tom.

"I hope we shall meet soon again," she said, and smiling back at him, started on her way towards Fairview.

Tom stood for a moment looking after her, while the two men indulged in surprised comments.

"Andrews," said young Mr. Gaylord, "just fetch my buggy and follow her until she gets into the gate."

CHAPTER III.

A SPIRIT IN THE WOODS.

EMPIRES crack before they crumble, and the first cracks seem easily mended—even as they have been mended before. A revolt in Gaul or Britain or Thrace is little to be minded, and a prophet in Judea less. And yet into him who sits in the seat of power a premonition of something impending gradually creeps—a premonition which he will not acknowledge, will not define. Yesterday, by the pointing of a finger, he created a province; to-day

he dares not, but consoles himself by saying he does not wish to point. No antagonist worthy of his steel has openly defied him, worthy of recognition by the opposition of a legion. But the sense of security has been subtly and indefinitely shaken.

By the strange telepathy which defies language, to the Honourable Hilary Vane, Governor of the Province, some such unacknowledged forebodings have likewise been communicated. A week after his conversation with Austen, on the return of his emperor from a trip to New York, the Honourable Hilary was summoned again to the foot of the throne, and his thoughts as he climbed the ridges towards Fairview were not in harmony with the carols of the birds in the depths of the forest and the joy of the bright June weather. Loneliness he had felt before, and to its ills he had applied the antidote of labour. The burden that sat upon his spirit to-day was not mere loneliness; to the truth of this his soul attested, but Hilary Vane had never listened to the promptings of his soul. He would have been shocked if you had told him this. Did he not confess, with his eyes shut, his sins every Sunday? Did he not publicly acknowledge his soul?

Austen Vane had once remarked that, if some keen American lawyer would really put his mind to the evasion of the Ten Commandments, the High Heavens themselves might be cheated. This saying would have shocked the Honourable Hilary inexpressibly. He had never been employed by a syndicate to draw up papers to avoid these mandates; he revered them, as he revered the Law, which he spelled with a capital. He spelled the word *Soul* with a capital likewise, and certainly no higher recognition could be desired than this!

Never in the Honourable Hilary's long, laborious, and

pre-eminently model existence had he realised that happiness is harmony. It would not be true to assert that, on this wonderful June day, a glimmering of this truth dawned upon him. Such a statement would be open to the charge of exaggeration, and his frame of mind was pessimistic. But he had got so far as to ask himself the question,—*Cui bono?* and repeated it several times on his drive, until a verse of Scripture came, unbidden, to his lips. "*For what hath man of all his labour, and of the vexation of his heart, wherein he hath laboured under the sun?*" and "*there is one event unto all.*" Austen's saying, that he had never learned how to enjoy life, he remembered, too. What had Austen meant by that?

Hitherto Hilary Vane had never failed of self-justification in any event which had befallen him; and while this consciousness of the rectitude of his own attitude had not made him happier, there had been a certain grim pleasure in it. To the fact that he had ruined, by sheer over-righteousness, the last years of the sunny life of Sarah Austen he had been oblivious—until to-day. The strange, retrospective mood which had come over him this afternoon led his thoughts into strange paths, and he found himself wondering if, after all, it had not been in his power to make her happier. Her dryad-like face, with its sweet, elusive smile, seemed to peer at him now wistfully out of the forest, and suddenly a new and startling thought rose up within him—after six-and-thirty years. Perhaps she had belonged in the forest! Perhaps, because he had sought to cage her, she had pined and died! The thought gave Hilary unwonted pain, and he strove to put it away from him; but memories such as these, once aroused, are not easily set at rest, and he bent his head as he recalled (with a new and significant pathos)

those hopeless and pitiful flights into the wilds she loved.

Now Austen had gone. Was there a Law behind these actions of mother and son which he had persisted in denouncing as vagaries? Austen was a man: a man, Hilary could not but see, who had the respect of his fellows, whose judgment and talents were becoming recognised. Was it possible that he, Hilary Vane, could have been one of those referred to by the Preacher? During the week which had passed since Austen's departure the house in Hanover Street had been haunted for Hilary. The going of his son had not left a mere void,—that would have been pain enough. Ghosts were there, ghosts which he could but dimly feel and see, and more than once, in the long evenings, he had taken to the streets to avoid them.

In that week Hilary's fear of meeting his son in the street or in the passages of the building had been equalled by a yearning to see him. Every morning, at the hour Austen was wont to drive Pepper to the Ripton House stables across the square, Hilary had contrived to be standing near his windows—a little back, and out of sight. And—stranger still!—he had turned from these glimpses to the reports of the Honourable Brush Bascom and his associates with a distaste he had never felt before.

With some such thoughts as these Hilary Vane turned into the last straight stretch of the avenue that led to Fairview House, with its red and white awnings gleaming in the morning sun. On the lawn, against a white and purple mass of lilacs and the darker background of pines, a straight and infinitely graceful figure in white caught his eye and held it. He recognised Victoria. She wore

a simple summer gown, the soft outline of its flounces mingling subtly with the white clusters behind her. She turned her head at the sound of the wheels and looked at him; the distance was not too great for a bow, but Hilary did not bow. Something in her face deterred him from this fact,—something which he himself did not understand or define. He sought to pronounce the incident negligible. What was the girl, or her look, to him? And yet (he found himself strangely thinking) he had read in her eyes a trace of the riddle which had been relentlessly pursuing him; there was an odd relation in her look to that of Sarah Austen. During the long years he had been coming to Fairview, even before the new house was built, when Victoria was in pinafores, he had never understood her. When she was a child, he had vaguely recognised in her a spirit antagonistic to his own, and her sayings had had a disconcerting ring. And now this simple glance of hers had troubled him—only more definitely.

It was a new experience for the Honourable Hilary to go into a business meeting with his faculties astray. Absently he rang the stable bell, surrendered his horse, and followed a footman to the retired part of the house occupied by the railroad president. Entering the oak-bound sanctum, he crossed it and took a seat by the window, merely nodding to Mr. Flint, who was dictating a letter. Mr. Flint took his time about the letter, but when it was finished he dismissed the stenographer with an impatient and powerful wave of the hand—as though brushing the man bodily out of the room. Remaining motionless until the door had closed, Mr. Flint turned abruptly and fixed his eyes on the contemplative figure of his chief counsel.

“Well?” he said.

"Well, Flint," answered the Honourable Hilary.

"Well," said Mr. Flint, "that bridge over Maple River has got loosened up so by the freshet that we have to keep freight cars on it to hold it down, and somebody is trying to make trouble by writing a public letter to the Railroad Commission, and calling attention to the head-on collision at Barker's Station."

"Well," replied the Honourable Hilary, again, "that won't have any influence on the Railroad Commission."

"No," said Mr. Flint, "but it all goes to increase this confounded public sentiment that's in the air, like small-pox. Another jackass pretends to have kept a table of the through trains on the Sumsic division, and says they've averaged forty-five minutes late at Edmonton. He says the through express made the run faster thirty years ago."

"I guess that's so," said the Honourable Hilary, "I was counsel for that road then. I read that letter. He says there isn't an engine on the division that could pull his hat off, up grade."

Neither of the two gentlemen appeared to deem this statement humorous.

"What these incendiaries don't understand," said Mr. Flint, "is that we have to pay dividends."

"It's because they don't get 'em," replied Mr. Vane, sententiously.

"The track slid into the water at Glendale," continued Mr. Flint. "I suppose they'll tell us we ought to rock ballast that line. You'll see the Railroad Commission, and give 'em a sketch of a report."

"I had a talk with Young yesterday," said Mr. Vane, his eyes on the stretch of lawn and forest framed by the window. For the sake of the ignorant, it may be well to

add that the Honourable Orrin Young was the chairman of the Commission.

"And now," said Mr. Flint, "not that this Crewe business amounts to *that*" (here the railroad president snapped his fingers with the intensity of a small pistol shot), "but what's *he* been doing?"

"Political advertising," said the Honourable Hilary.

"Plenty of it, I guess," Mr. Flint remarked acidly. "That's one thing Tooting can't teach him. He's a natural-born genius at it."

"Tooting can help—even at that," answered Mr. Vane, ironically. "They've got a sketch of so-called North-eastern methods in forty weekly newspapers this week, with a picture of that public benefactor and martyr, Humphrey Crewe. Here's a sample of it."

Mr. Flint waved the sample away.

"You've made a list of the newspapers that printed it?" Mr. Flint demanded. Had he lived in another age he might have added, "Have the malefactors burned alive in my garden."

"Brush has seen some of 'em," said Mr. Vane, no doubt referring to the editors, "and I had some of 'em come to Ripton. They've got a lot to say about the freedom of the press, and their right to take political advertising. Crewe's matter is in the form of a despatch, and most of 'em pointed out at the top of the editorial columns that their papers are not responsible for despatches in the news columns. Six of 'em are out and out for Crewe, and those fellows are honest enough."

"Take away their passes and advertising," said Mr. Flint. ("Off with their heads!" said the Queen of Hearts.)

"I wouldn't do that if I were you, Flint; they might

make capital out of it. I think you'll find that five of 'em have sent their passes back, anyway."

"Freeman will give you some new ideas" (from the "Book of Arguments," although Mr. Flint did not say so) "which have occurred to me might be distributed for editorial purposes next week. And, by-the-way, what have you done about that brilliant Mr. Coombes of the *Johnstown Ray*, who says 'the Northeastern Railroads give us a pretty good government'?"

The Honourable Hilary shook his head.

"Too much zeal," he observed. "I guess he won't do it again."

For a while after that they talked of strictly legal matters, which the chief counsel produced in order out of his bag. But when these were finally disposed of, Mr. Flint led the conversation back to the Honourable Humphrey Crewe, who stood harmless—to be sure—like a bull on the track which it might be unwise to run over.

"He doesn't amount to a soap bubble in a gale," Mr. Flint declared contemptuously. "Sometimes I think we made a great mistake to notice him."

"We haven't noticed him," said Mr. Vane; "the newspapers have."

Mr. Flint brushed this distinction aside.

"That," he said irritably, "and letting Tooting go—"

The Honourable Hilary's eyes began to grow red. In former days Mr. Flint had not often questioned his judgment.

"There's one thing more I wanted to mention to you," said the chief counsel. "In past years I have frequently drawn your attention to that section of the act of consolidation which declares that rates and fares existing at the time of its passage shall not be increased."

"Well," said Mr. Flint, impatiently, "well, what of it?"

"Only this," replied the Honourable Hilary, "you disregarded my advice, and the rates on many things are higher than they were."

"Upon my word, Vane," said Mr. Flint, "I wish you'd chosen some other day to croak. What do you want me to do? Put all the rates back because this upstart politician Crewe is making a noise? Who's going to dig up that section?"

"Somebody has dug it up," said Mr. Vane.

This was the last straw.

"Speak out, man!" he cried. "What are you leading up to?"

"Just this," answered the Honourable Hilary; "that the Gaylord Lumber Company are going to bring suit under that section."

Mr. Flint rose, thrust his hands in his pockets, and paced the room twice.

"Have they got a case?" he demanded.

"It looks a little that way to me," said Mr. Vane. "I'm not prepared to give a definite opinion as yet."

Mr. Flint measured the room twice again.

"Did that old fool Hammer stumble onto this?"

"Hammer's sick," said Mr. Vane; "they say he's got Bright's disease. My son discovered that section."

There was a certain ring of pride in the Honourable Hilary's voice, and a lifting of the head as he pronounced the words "my son," which did not escape Mr. Flint. The railroad president walked slowly to the arm of the chair in which his chief counsel was seated, and stood looking down at him. But the Honourable Hilary appeared unconscious of what was impending.

"Your son!" exclaimed Mr. Flint. "So your son, the

son of the man who has been my legal adviser and confidant and friend for thirty years, is going to join the Crewes and Tootings in their assaults on established decency and order! He's out for cheap political perferment, too, is he? By thunder! I thought that he had some such thing in his mind when he came in here and threw his pass in my face and took that Meader suit. I don't mind telling you that he's the man I've been afraid of all along. He's got a head on him—I saw that at the start. I trusted to you to control him, and this is how you do it."

It was characteristic of the Honourable Hilary, when confronting an angry man, to grow cooler as the other's temper increased.

"I don't want to control him," he said.

"I guess you couldn't," retorted Mr. Flint.

"That's a better way of putting it," replied the Honourable Hilary, "I couldn't."

The chief counsel for the Northeastern Railroads got up and went to the window, where he stood for some time with his back turned to the president. Then Hilary Vane faced about.

"Mr. Flint," he began, in his peculiar deep and resonant voice, "you've said some things to-day that I won't forget. I want to tell you, first of all, that I admire my son."

"I thought so," Mr. Flint interrupted.

"And more than that," the Honourable Hilary continued, "I prophesy that the time will come when you'll admire him. Austen Vane never did an underhanded thing in his life—or committed a mean action. He's be'n wild, but he's always told me the truth. I've done him injustice a good many times, but I won't stand up and

listen to another man do him injustice." Here he paused, and picked up his bag. "I'm going down to Ripton to write out my resignation as counsel for your roads, and as soon as you can find another man to act, I shall consider it accepted."

It is difficult to put down on paper the sensations of the president of the Northeastern Railroads as he listened to these words from a man with whom he had been in business relations for over a quarter of a century: a man upon whose judgment he had always relied implicitly, who had been a strong fortress in time of trouble. Such sentences had an incendiary, blasphemous ring on Hilary Vane's lips—at first. It was as if the sky had fallen, and the Northeastern had been wiped out of existence.

Mr. Flint's feelings were, in a sense, akin to those of a traveller by sea who wakens out of a sound sleep in his cabin, with peculiar and unpleasant sensations, which he gradually discovers are due to cold water, and he realises that the boat on which he is travelling is sinking.

The Honourable Hilary, with his bag, was halfway to the door, when Mr. Flint crossed the room in three strides and seized him by the arm.

"Hold on, Vane," he said, speaking with some difficulty; "I'm—I'm a little upset this morning, and my temper got the best of me. You and I have been good friends for too many years for us to part this way. Sit down a minute, for God's sake, and let's cool off. I didn't intend to say what I did. I apologise."

Mr. Flint dropped his counsel's arm and pulled out a handkerchief, and mopped his face. "Sit down, Hilary," he said.

The Honourable Hilary's tight lips trembled. Only

three or four times in their long friendship had the president made use of his first name.

"You wouldn't leave me in the lurch now, Hilary," Mr. Flint continued, "when all this nonsense is in the air? Think of the effect such an announcement would have! Everybody knows and respects you, and we can't do without your advice and counsel. But I won't put it on that ground. I'd never forgive myself, as long as I lived, if I lost one of my oldest and most valued personal friends in this way."

The Honourable Hilary looked at Mr. Flint, and sat down. He began to cut a piece of Honey Dew, but his hand shook. It was difficult, as we know, for him to give expression to his feelings.

"All right," he said.

Half an hour later Victoria, from under the awning of the little balcony in front of her mother's sitting-room, saw her father come out bareheaded into the sun and escort the Honourable Hilary Vane to his buggy. This was an unwonted proceeding.

Victoria loved to sit in that balcony, a book lying neglected in her lap, listening to the summer sounds: the tinkle of distant cattle bells, the bass note of a hurrying bee, the strangely compelling song of the hermit-thrush, which made her breathe quickly; the summer wind, stirring wantonly, was prodigal with perfumes gathered from the pines and the sweet June clover in the fields and the banks of flowers; in the distance, across the gentle foreground of the hills, Sawanec beckoned—did Victoria but raise her eyes!—to a land of enchantment.

The appearance of her father and Hilary had broken her reverie, and a new thought, like a pain, had clutched her. The buggy rolled slowly down the drive, and Mr.

Flint, staring after it a moment, went in the house. After a few minutes, he emerged again, an old felt hat on his head which he was wont to wear in the country and a stick in his hand. Without raising his eyes, he started slowly across the lawn; and to Victoria, leaning forward intently over the balcony rail, there seemed an unwonted lack of purpose in his movements. Usually he struck out briskly in the direction of the pastures where his prize Guernseys were feeding, stopping on the way to pick up the manager of his farm. There are signs, unknown to men, which women read, and Victoria felt her heart beating, as she turned and entered the sitting-room through the French window. A trained nurse was softly closing the door of the bedroom on the right.

"Mrs. Flint is asleep," she said.

"I am going out for a little while, Miss Oliver," Victoria answered, and the nurse returned a gentle smile of understanding.

Victoria, descending the stairs, hastily pinned on a hat which she kept in the coat closet, and hurried across the lawn in the direction Mr. Flint had taken. Reaching the pine grove, thinned by a famous landscape architect, she paused involuntarily to wonder again at the ultramarine of Sawanec through the upright columns of the trunks under the high canopy of boughs. The grove was on a plateau, which was cut on the side nearest the mountain by the line of a grey stone wall, under which the land fell away sharply. Mr. Flint was seated on a bench, his hands clasped across his stick, and as she came softly over the carpet of the needles he did not hear her until she stood beside him.

"You didn't tell me that you were going for a walk," she said reproachfully.

He started, and dropped his stick. She stooped quickly, picked it up for him, and settled herself at his side.

"I—I didn't expect to go, Victoria," he answered.

"You see," she said, "it's useless to try to slip away. I saw you from the balcony."

"How's your mother feeling?" he asked.

"She's asleep. She seems better to me since she's come back to Fairview."

Mr. Flint stared at the mountain with unseeing eyes.

"Father," said Victoria, "don't you think you ought to stay up here at least a week, and rest? I think so."

"No," he said, "no. There's a directors' meeting of a trust company to-morrow which I have to attend. I'm not tired."

Victoria shook her head, smiling at him with serious eyes.

"I don't believe you know when you are tired," she declared. "I can't see the good of all these directors' meetings. Why don't you retire, and live the rest of your life in peace? You've got—money enough, and even if you haven't," she added, with the little quiver of earnestness that sometimes came into her voice, "we could sell this big house and go back to the farmhouse to live. We used to be so happy there."

He turned abruptly, and fixed upon her a steadfast, searching stare that held, nevertheless, a strange tenderness in it.

"You don't care for all this, do you, Victoria?" he demanded, waving his stick to indicate the domain of Fairview.

She laughed gently, and raised her eyes to the green roof of the needles.

"If we could only keep the pine grove!" she sighed. "Do you remember what good times we had in the farmhouse, when you and I used to go off for whole days together?"

"Yes," said Mr. Flint, "yes."

"We don't do that any more," said Victoria. "It's only a little drive and a walk, now and then. And they seem to be growing—scarcer."

Mr. Flint moved uneasily, and made an attempt to clear his voice.

"I know it," he said, and further speech seemingly failed him. Victoria had the greater courage of the two.

"Why don't we?" she asked.

"I've often thought of it," he replied, still seeking his words with difficulty. "I find myself with more to do every year, Victoria, instead of less."

"Then why don't you give it up?"

"Why?" he asked, "why? Sometimes I wish with my whole soul I could give it up. I've always said that you had more sense than most women, but even you could not understand."

"I could understand," said Victoria.

He threw at her another glance,—a ring in her words proclaimed their truth in spite of his determined doubt. In her eyes—had he but known it!—was a wisdom that exceeded his.

"You don't realise what you're saying," he exclaimed; "I can't leave the helm."

"Isn't it," she said, "rather the power that is so hard to relinquish?"

The feelings of Augustus Flint when he heard this question were of a complex nature. It was the second time that day he had been shocked,—the first being when

Hilary Vane had unexpectedly defended his son. The word Victoria had used, *power*, had touched him on the quick. What had she meant by it? Had she been his wife and not his daughter, he would have flown into a rage. Augustus Flint was not a man given to the psychological amusement of self-examination; he had never analysed his motives. He had had little to do with women, except Victoria. The Rose of Sharon knew him as the fountain-head from which authority and money flowed, but Victoria, since her childhood, had been his refuge from care, and in the haven of her companionship he had lost himself for brief moments of his life. She was the one being he really loved, with whom he consulted on such affairs of importance as he felt to be within her scope and province,—the cattle, the men on the place outside of the household, the wisdom of buying the Baker farm; bequests to charities, paintings, the library; and recently he had left to her judgment the European baths and the kind of treatment which her mother had required. Victoria had consulted with the physicians in Paris, and had made these decisions herself. From a child she had never shown a disposition to evade responsibility.

To his intimate business friends, Mr. Flint was in the habit of speaking of her as his right-hand man, but she was circumscribed by her sex,—or rather by Mr. Flint's idea of her sex,—and it never occurred to him that she could enter into the larger problems of his life. For this reason he had never asked himself whether such a state of affairs would be desirable. In reality it was her sympathy he craved, and such an interpretation of himself as he chose to present to her.

So her question was a shock. He suddenly beheld

his daughter transformed, a new personality who had been thinking, and thinking along paths which he had never cared to travel.

"The power!" he repeated. "What do you mean by that, Victoria?"

She sat for a moment on the end of the bench, gazing at him with a questioning, searching look which he found disconcerting. What had happened to his daughter? He little guessed the tumult in her breast. She herself could not fully understand the strange turn the conversation had taken towards the gateway of the vital things.

"It is natural for men to love power, isn't it?"

"I suppose so," said Mr. Flint, uneasily. "I don't know what you're driving at, Victoria."

"You control the lives and fortunes of a great many people."

"That's just it," answered Mr. Flint, with a dash at this opening; "my responsibilities are tremendous. I can't relinquish them."

"There is no—younger man to take your place? Not that I mean you are old, father," she continued, "but you have worked very hard all your life, and deserve a holiday the rest of it."

"I don't know of any younger man," said Mr. Flint. "I don't mean to say I'm the only person in the world who can safeguard the stockholders' interests in the North-eastern. But I know the road and its problems. I don't understand this from you, Victoria. It doesn't sound like you. And as for letting go the helm now," he added, with a short laugh tinged with bitterness, "I'd be posted all over the country as a coward."

"Why?" asked Victoria, in the same quiet way.

"Why? Because a lot of discontented and disappointed

people who have made failures of their lives are trying to give me as much trouble as they can."

"Are you sure they are all disappointed and discontented, father?" she said.

"What!" exclaimed Mr. Flint, "you ask me that question? You, my own daughter, about people who are trying to make me out a rascal!"

"I don't think they are trying to make you out a rascal—at least most of them are not," said Victoria. "I don't think the—what you might call the personal aspect enters in with the honest ones."

Mr. Flint was inexpressibly amazed. He drew a long breath.

"Who are the honest ones?" he cried. "Do you mean to say that you, my own daughter, are defending these charlatans?"

"Listen, father," said Victoria. "I didn't mean to worry you, I didn't mean to bring up that subject to-day. Come—let's go for a walk and see the new barn."

But Mr. Flint remained firmly planted on the bench.

"Then you did intend to bring up the subject—some day?" he asked.

"Yes," said Victoria. She sat down again. "I have often wanted to hear—your side of it."

"Whose side have you heard?" demanded Mr. Flint.

A crimson flush crept into her cheek, but her father was too disturbed to notice it.

"You know," she said gently, "I go about the country a good deal, and I hear people talking,—farmers, and labourers, and people in the country stores who don't know that I'm your daughter."

"What do they say?" asked Mr. Flint, leaning forward eagerly and aggressively.

Victoria hesitated, turning over the matter in her mind.

"You understand, I am merely repeating what they say—"

"Yes, yes," he interrupted, "I want to know how far this thing has gone among them."

"Well," continued Victoria, looking at him bravely, "as nearly as I can remember their argument it is this: that the Northeastern Railroads control the politics of the State for their own benefit. That you appoint the governors and those that go to the Legislature, and that—Hilary Vane gets them elected. They say that he manages a political machine—that's the right word, isn't it?—for you. And that no laws can be passed of which you do not approve. And they say that the politicians whom Hilary Vane commands, and the men whom they put into office are all beholden to the railroad, and are of a sort which good citizens cannot support. They say that the railroad has destroyed the people's government."

Mr. Flint, for the moment forgetting or ignoring the charges, glanced at her in astonishment. The arraignment betrayed an amount of thought on the subject which he had not suspected.

"Upon my word, Victoria," he said, "you ought to take the stump for Humphrey Crewe."

She reached out with a womanly gesture, and laid her hand upon his.

"I am only telling you—what I hear," she said. "Won't you explain to me the way you look at it? These people don't all seem to be dishonest men or charlatans. Some of them, I know, are honest." And her colour rose again.

"Then they are dupes and fools," Mr. Flint declared

vehemently. "I don't know how to explain it to you—the subject is too vast, too far-reaching. One must have had some business experience to grasp it. I don't mean to say you're not intelligent, but I'm at a loss where to begin with you. Looked at from their limited point of view, it would seem as if they had a case. I don't mean your friend, Humphrey Crewe—it's anything to get office with him. Why, he came up here and begged me—"

"I wasn't thinking of Humphrey Crewe," said Victoria.

Mr. Flint gave an ejaculation of distaste.

"He's no more of a reformer than I am. And now we've got that wild son of Hilary Vane's—the son of one of my oldest friends and associates—making trouble. He's bitten with this thing, too, and he's got some brains in his head. Why," exclaimed Mr. Flint, stopping abruptly and facing his daughter, "you know him! He's the one who drove you home that evening from Crewe's party."

"I remember," Victoria faltered, drawing her hand away.

"I wasn't very civil to him that night, but I've always been on the look-out for him. I sent him a pass once, and he came up here and gave me as insolent a talking to as I ever had in my life."

How well Victoria recalled that first visit, and how she had wondered about the cause of it! So her father and Austen Vane had quarrelled from the first.

"I'm sure he didn't mean to be insolent," she said, in a low voice. "He isn't at all that sort."

"I don't know what sort he is, except that he isn't my sort," Mr. Flint retorted, intent upon the subject which had kindled his anger earlier in the day. "I don't pretend to understand him. He could probably have

been counsel for the road if he had behaved decently. Instead, he starts in with suits against us. He's hit upon something now."

The president of the Northeastern dug savagely into the ground with his stick, and suddenly perceived that his daughter had her face turned away from his, towards the mountain.

"Well, I won't bore you with that."

She turned with a look in her eyes that bewildered him.

"You're not—boring me," she said.

"I didn't intend to go into all that," he explained more calmly, "but the last few days have been trying. We've got to expect the wind to blow from all directions."

Victoria smiled at him faintly.

"I have told you," she said, "that what you need is a trip abroad. Perhaps some day you will remember it."

"Maybe I'll go in the autumn," he answered, smiling back at her. "These little flurries don't amount to anything more than mosquito-bites—only mosquitoes are irritating. You and I understand each other, Victoria,—and now listen. I'll give you the broad view of this subject, the view I've got to take, and I've lived in the world and seen more of it than some folks who think they know it all. I am virtually the trustee for thousands of stockholders, many of whom are widows and orphans. These people are innocent; they rely on my ability, and my honesty, for their incomes. Few men who have not had experience in railroad management know one-tenth of the difficulties and obstructions encountered by a railroad president who strives to do his duty by the road. My business is to run the Northeastern as economically as

is consistent with good service and safety, and to give the stockholders the best return for their money. I am the steward—and so long as I am the steward," he exclaimed, "I'm going to do what I think is right, taking into consideration all the difficulties that confront me."

He got up and took a turn or two on the pine-needles. Victoria regarded him in silence. He appeared to her at that moment the embodiment of the power he represented. Force seemed to emanate from him, and she understood more clearly than ever how, from a poor boy on an obscure farm in Truro, he had risen to his present height.

"I don't say the service is what it should be," he went on, "but give me time—give me time. With all this prosperity in the country we can't handle the freight. We haven't got cars enough, tracks enough, engines enough. I won't go into that with you. But I do expect you to understand this: that politicians are politicians; they have always been corrupt as long as I have known them, and in my opinion they always will be. The Northeastern is the largest property holder in the State, pays the biggest tax, and has the most at stake. The politicians could ruin us in a single session of the Legislature—and what's more, they *would* do it. We'd have to be paying blackmail all the time to prevent measures that would compel us to go out of business. This is a fact, and not a theory. What little influence I exert politically I have to maintain in order to protect the property of my stockholders from annihilation. It isn't to be supposed," he concluded, "that I'm going to see the State turned over to a man like Humphrey Crewe. I wish to Heaven that this and every other State had a George Washington for governor and a majority of Robert Morris in the Legislature. If they exist, in these days, the people won't elect

'em—that's all. The kind of man the people will elect, if you let 'em alone, is a man who brings in a bill and comes to you privately and wants you to buy him off."

"Oh, father," Victoria cried, "I can't believe that of the people I see about here! They seem so kind and honest and high-principled."

Mr. Flint gave a short laugh.

"They're dupes, I tell you. They're at the mercy of any political schemer who thinks it worth his while to fool 'em. Take Leith, for instance. There's a man over there who has controlled every office in that town for twenty-five years or more. He buys and sells votes and credentials like cattle. His name is Job Braden."

"Why," said Victoria, "I saw him at Humphrey Crewe's garden-party."

"I guess you did," said Mr. Flint, "and I guess Humphrey Crewe saw him before he went."

Victoria was silent, the recollection of the talk between Mr. Tooting and Mr. Crewe running through her mind, and Mr. Tooting's saying that he had done "dirty things" for the Northeastern. She felt that this was something she could not tell her father, nor could she answer his argument with what Tom Gaylord had said. She could not, indeed, answer Mr. Flint's argument at all; the subject, as he had declared, being too vast for her. And moreover, as she well knew, Mr. Flint was a man whom other men could not easily answer; he bore them down, even as he had borne her down. Involuntarily her mind turned to Austen, and she wondered what he had said; she wondered how he would have answered her father—whether he could have answered him. And she knew not what to think. Could it be right, in a position of power and responsibility, to acknowledge evil and deal with it as evil?

That was, in effect, the gist of Mr. Flint's contention. She did not know. She had never (strangely enough, she thought) sought before to analyse the ethical side of her father's character. One aspect of him she had shared with her mother, that he was a tower of defence and strength, and that his name alone had often been sufficient to get difficult things done.

Was he right in this? And were his opponents charlatans, or dupes, or idealists who could never be effective? Mr. Crewe wanted an office; Tom Gaylord had a suit against the road, and Austen Vane was going to bring that suit! What did she really know of Austen Vane? But her soul cried out treason at this, and she found herself repeating, with intensity, "I believe in him! I believe in him!" She would have given worlds to have been able to stand up before her father and tell him that Austen would not bring the suit at this time—that Austen had not allowed his name to be mentioned for office in this connection, and had spurned Mr. Crewe's advances. But she had not seen Austen since February.

What was his side of it? He had never told her, and she respected his motives—yet, what was his side? Fresh from the inevitably deep impressions which her father's personality had stamped upon her, she wondered if Austen could cope with the argument before which she had been so helpless.

The fact that she made of each of these two men the embodiment of a different and opposed idea did not occur to Victoria until that afternoon. Unconsciously, each had impersonated the combatants in a struggle which was going on in her own breast. Her father himself, instinctively, had chosen Austen Vane for his antagonist without knowing that she had an interest in him. Would Mr.

Flint ever know? Or would the time come when she would be forced to take a side? The blood mounted to her temples as she put the question from her.

CHAPTER IV.

MR. JABE JENNEY ENTERTAINS.

MR. FLINT had dropped the subject with his last remark, nor had Victoria attempted to pursue it. Bewildered and not a little depressed (a new experience for her), she had tried to hide her feelings. He, too, was harassed and tired, and she had drawn him away from the bench and through the pine woods to the pastures to look at his cattle and the model barn he was building for them. At half-past three, in her runabout, she had driven him to the East Tunbridge station, where he had taken the train for New York. He had waved her a good-bye from the platform, and smiled: and for a long time, as she drove through the silent roads, his words and his manner remained as vivid as though he were still by her side. He was a man who had fought and conquered, and who fought on for the sheer love of it.

It was a blue day in the hill country. At noon the clouds had crowned Sawanec—a sure sign of rain; the rain had come and gone, a June downpour, and the overcast sky lent (Victoria fancied) to the country-side a new atmosphere. The hills did not look the same. It was the kind of a day when certain finished country places are at their best—or rather seem best to express their meaning; a day for an event; a day set strangely apart

with an indefinable distinction. Victoria recalled such days in her youth when weddings or garden-parties had brought canopies into service, or news had arrived to upset the routine of the household. Raindrops silvered the pines, and the light winds shook them down on the road in a musical shower.

Victoria was troubled, as she drove, over a question which had recurred to her many times since her talk that morning: had she been hypocritical in not telling her father that she had seen more of Austen Vane than she had implied by her silence? For many years Victoria had chosen her own companions; when the custom had begun, her mother had made a protest which Mr. Flint had answered with a laugh; he thought Victoria's judgment better than his wife's. Ever since that time the Rose of Sharon had taken the attitude of having washed her hands of responsibility for a course which must inevitably lead to ruin. She discussed some of Victoria's acquaintances with Mrs. Pomfret and other intimates; and Mrs. Pomfret had lost no time in telling Mrs. Flint about her daughter's sleigh-ride at the State capital with a young man from Ripton who seemed to be seeing entirely too much of Victoria. Mrs. Pomfret had marked certain danger signs, and as a conscientious woman was obliged to speak of them. Mrs. Pomfret did not wish to see Victoria make a *mésalliance*.

"My dear Fanny," Mrs. Flint had cried, lifting herself from the lace pillows, "what do you expect me to do—especially when I have nervous prostration? I've tried to do my duty by Victoria—goodness knows—to bring her up among the sons and daughters of the people who are my friends. They tell me that she has temperament—whatever that may be. I'm sure I never found

out, except that the best thing to do with people who have it is to let them alone and pray for them. When we go abroad I like the Ritz and Claridge's and that new hotel in Rome. I see my friends there. Victoria, if you please, likes the little hotels in the narrow streets where you see *nobody*, and where you are *most* uncomfortable." (Miss Oliver, it's time for those seven drops.) "As I was saying, Victoria's enigmatical—hopeless, although a French *comtesse* who wouldn't look at anybody at the baths this spring became wild about her, and a certain type of elderly English peer always wants to marry her. (I suppose I *do* look pale to-day.) Victoria loves art, and really knows something about it. She adores to potter around those queer places abroad where you see strange English and Germans and Americans with red books in their hands. What am *I* to do about this young man of whom you speak—whatever his name is? I suppose Victoria will marry him—it would be just like her. But what can I do, Fanny? I can't manage her, and it's no use going to her father. He would only laugh. Augustus actually told me once there was no such thing as social position in this country!"

"American men of affairs," Mrs. Pomfret judicially replied, "are too busy to consider position. They make it, my dear, as a by-product." Mrs. Pomfret smiled, and mentally noted this aptly technical witticism for use again.

"I suppose they do," assented the Rose of Sharon, "and their daughters sometimes squander it, just as their sons squander their money."

"I'm not at all sure that Victoria is going to squander it," was Mrs. Pomfret's comforting remark. "She is too much of a personage, and she has great wealth behind her. I wish Alice were more like her, in some ways.

Alice is so helpless, she has to be prodded and prompted continually. I can't leave her for a moment. And when she is married, I'm going into a sanatorium for six months."

"I hear," said Mrs. Flint, "that Humphrey Crewe is quite *épris*."

"Poor dear Humphrey!" exclaimed Mrs. Pomfret, "he can think of nothing else but politics."

But we are not to take up again, as yet, the deeds of the crafty Ulysses. In order to relate an important conversation between Mrs. Pomfret and the Rose of Sharon, we have gone back a week in this history, and have left Victoria—absorbed in her thoughts—driving over a wood road of many puddles that led to the Four Corners, near Avalon. The road climbed the song-laden valley of a brook, redolent now with scents of which the rain had robbed the fern, but at length Victoria reached an upland where the young corn was springing from the black furrows that followed the contours of the hillsides, where the big-eyed cattle lay under the heavy maples and oaks or gazed at her across the fences.

Victoria drew up in front of an unpainted farm-house straggling beside the road, a farm-house which began with the dignity of fluted pilasters and ended in a tumble-down open shed filled with a rusty sleigh and a hundred nondescript articles—some of which seemed to be moving. Intently studying this phenomenon from her run-about, she finally discovered that the moving objects were children; one of whom, a little girl, came out and stared at her.

"How do you do, Mary?" said Victoria. "Isn't your name Mary?"

The child nodded.

"I remember you," she said; "you're the rich lady mother met at the party, that got father a job."

Victoria smiled. And such was the potency of the smile that the child joined in it.

"Where's brother?" asked Victoria. "He must be quite grown up since we gave him lemonade."

Mary pointed to the woodshed.

"O dear!" exclaimed Victoria, leaping out of the runabout and hitching her horse, "aren't you afraid some of those sharp iron things will fall on him?" She herself rescued brother from what seemed untimely and certain death, and set him down in safety in the middle of the grass plot. He looked up at her with the air of one whose dignity has been irretrievably injured, and she laughed as she reached down and pulled his nose. Then his face, too, became wreathed in smiles.

"Mary, how old are you?"

"Seven, ma'am."

"And I'm five," Mary's sister chimed in.

"I want you to promise me," said Victoria, "that you won't let brother play in that shed. And the very next time I come I'll bring you both the nicest thing I can think of."

Mary began to dance.

"We'll promise, we'll promise!" she cried for both, and at this juncture Mrs. Fitch, who had run from the wash-tub to get into her Sunday waist, came out of the door.

"So you hain't forgot me!" she exclaimed. "I was almost afeard you'd forgot me."

"I've been away," said Victoria, gently taking the woman's hand and sitting down on the doorstep.

"Don't set there," said Mrs. Fitch; "come into the

parlour. You'll dirty your dress—Mary!" This last in admonition.

"Let her stay where she is," said Victotia, putting her arm around the child. "The dress washes, and it's so nice outside."

"You rich folks certainly do have strange notions," declared Mrs. Fitch, fingering the flounce on Victoria's skirt, which formed the subject of conversation for the next few minutes.

"How are you getting on?" Victoria asked at length.

A look of pain came into the woman's eyes.

"You've be'n so good to us, and done so much gettin' Eben a job on your father's place, that I don't feel as if I ought to lie to you. He done it again—on Saturday night. First time in three months. The manager up at Fairview don't know it. Eben was all right Monday."

"I'm sorry," said Victoria, simply. "Was it bad?"

"It might have be'n. Young Mr. Vane is stayin' up at Jabe Jenney's—you know, the first house as you turn off the hill road. Mr. Vane heard some way what you'd done for us, and he saw Eben in Ripton Saturday night, and made him get into his buggy and come home. I guess he had a time with Eben. Mr. Vane, he came around here on Sunday, and gave him as stiff a talkin' to as he ever got, I guess. He told Eben he'd ought to be ashamed of himself goin' back on folks who was tryin' to help him pay his mortgage. And I'll say this for Eben, he was downright ashamed. He told Mr. Vane he could lick him if he caught him drunk again, and Mr. Vane said he would. My, what a pretty colour you've got to-day!"

Victoria rose. "I'm going to send you down some washing," she said.

Mrs. Fitch insisted upon untying the horse, while Victoria renewed her promises to the children.

There were two ways of going back to Fairview,—a long and a short way,—and the long way led by Jabe Jenney's farm. Victoria came to the fork in the road, paused,—and took the long way. Several times after this, she pulled her horse down to a walk, and was apparently on the point of turning around again: a disinterested observer in a farm waggon, whom she passed, thought that she had missed her road. "The first house after you turn off the hill road," Mrs. Fitch had said. She could still, of course, keep on the hill road, but that would take her to Weymouth, and she would never get home.

It is useless to go into the reasons for this act of Victoria's. She did not know them herself. The nearer Victoria got to Mr. Jenney's, the more she wished herself back at the forks. Suppose Mrs. Fitch told him of her visit! Perhaps she could pass the Jenneys' unnoticed. The chances of this, indeed, seemed highly favourable, and it was characteristic of her sex that she began to pray fervently to this end. Then she turned off the hill road, feeling as though she had but to look back to see the smoke of the burning bridges.

Victoria remembered the farm now; for Mr. Jabe Jenney, being a person of importance in the town of Leith, had a house commensurate with his estate. The house was not large, but its dignity was akin to Mr. Jenney's position: it was painted a spotless white, and not a shingle or a nail was out of place. Before it stood the great trees planted by Mr. Jenney's ancestors, which Victoria and other people had often paused on their drives to admire, and on the hillside was a little, old-fashioned flower garden; lilacs clustered about the small-paned windows,

and a bitter-sweet clung to the roof and pillars of the porch. These details of the place (which she had never before known as Mr. Jenney's) flashed into Victoria's mind before she caught sight of the great trees themselves looming against the sombre blue-black of the sky: the wind, rising fitfully, stirred the leaves with a sound like falling waters, and a great drop fell upon her cheek. Victoria raised her eyes in alarm, and across the open spaces, toward the hills which piled higher and higher yet against the sky, was a white veil of rain. She touched with her whip the shoulder of her horse, recalling a farm a quarter of a mile beyond—she must not be caught here!

More drops followed, and the great trees seemed to reach out to her a protecting shelter. She spoke to the horse. Beyond the farm-house, on the other side of the road, was a group of grey, slate-shingled barns, and here two figures confronted her. One was that of the comfortable, middle-aged Mr. Jenney himself, standing on the threshold of the barn, and laughing heartily, and crying: "Hang on to him! That's right—get him by the nose!"

The person thus addressed had led a young horse to water at the spring which bubbled out of a sugar-kettle hard by; and the horse, quivering, had barely touched his nostrils to the water when he reared backward, jerking the halter-rope taut. Then followed, with bewildering rapidity, a series of manœuvres on the part of the horse to get away, and on the part of the person to prevent this, and inasmuch as the struggle took place in the middle of the road, Victoria had to stop. By the time the person had got the horse by the nose,—shutting off his wind,—the rain was coming down in earnest.

"Drive right in," cried Mr. Jenney, hospitably; "you'll get wet. Look out, Austen, there's a lady comin'. Why, it's Miss Flint!"

Victoria knew that her face must be on fire. She felt Austen Vane's quick glance upon her, but she did not dare look to the right or left as she drove into the barn. There seemed no excuse for any other course.

"How be you?" said Mr. Jenney; "kind of lucky you happened along here, wahn't it? You'd have been soaked before you got to Harris's. How be you? I ain't seen you since that highfalutin party up to Crewe's."

"It's very kind of you to let me come in, Mr. Jenney. But I have a rain-coat and a boot, and—I really ought to be going on."

Here Victoria produced the rain-coat from under the seat. The garment was a dark blue, and Mr. Jenney felt of its gossamer weight with a good-natured contempt.

"That wouldn't be any more good than so much cheese-cloth," he declared, nodding in the direction of the white sheet of the storm. "Would it, Austen?"

She turned her head slowly and met Austen's eyes. Fortunate that the barn was darkened, that he might not see how deep the colour mantling in her temples! His head was bare, and she had never really marked before the superb setting of it on his shoulders, for he wore a grey flannel shirt open at the neck, revealing a bronzed throat. His sinewy arms—weather-burned, too—were bare above the elbows.

Explanations of her presence sprang to her lips, but she put them from her as subterfuges unworthy of him. She would not attempt to deceive him in the least. She *had* wished to see him again—nor did she analyse her motives. Once more beside him, the feeling of confidence,

of belief in him, rose within her and swept all else away—burned in a swift consuming flame the doubts of absence. He took her hand, but she withdrew it quickly.

"This is a fortunate accident," he said,—“fortunate, at least, for me.”

"Perhaps Mr. Jenney will not agree with you," she retorted.

But Mr. Jenney was hitching the horse and throwing a blanket over him. Suddenly, before they realised it, the farmer had vanished into the storm, and this unexplained desertion of their host gave rise to an awkward silence between them, which each for awhile strove vainly to break. In the great moments of life, trivialities become dwarfed and ludicrous, and the burden of such occasions is on the woman.

"So you've taken to farming," she said,—“isn't it about haying time?”

He laughed.

"We begin next week. And you—you've come back in season for it. I hope that your mother is better."

"Yes," replied Victoria, simply, "the baths helped her. But I'm glad to get back,—I like my own country so much better,—and especially this part of it," she added. "I can bear to be away from New York in the winter, but not from Fairview in the summer."

At this instant Mr. Jenney appeared at the barn door bearing a huge green umbrella.

"Come over to the house—Mis' Jenney is expectin' you," he said.

Victoria hesitated. To refuse would be ungracious; moreover, she could risk no misinterpretation of her acts, and she accepted. Mrs. Jenney met her on the doorstep, and conducted her into that sanctum reserved for occa-

sions, the parlour, with its Bible, its flat, old-fashioned piano, its samplers, its crayon portrait of Mr. and Mrs. Jenney after their honeymoon; with its aroma that suggested Sundays and best manners. Mrs. Jenney, with incredible rapidity (for her figure was not what it had been at the time of the crayon portrait), had got into a black dress, over which she wore a spotless apron. She sat in the parlour with her guest until Mr. Jenney reappeared with shining face and damp hair.

"You'll excuse me, my dear," said Mrs. Jenney, "but the supper's on the stove, and I have to run out now and then."

Mr. Jenney was entertaining. He had the shrewd, humorous outlook upon life characteristic of the best type of New England farmer, and Victoria got along with him famously. His comments upon his neighbours were kindly but incisive, except when the question of spirituous liquors occurred to him. Austen Vane he thought the world of, and dwelt upon this subject a little longer than Victoria, under the circumstances, would have wished.

"He comes out here just like it was home," said Mr. Jenney, "and helps with the hosses and cows the same as if he wasn't gettin' to be one of the greatest lawyers in the State."

"O dear, Mr. Jenney," said Victoria, glancing out of the window, "I'll really have to go home. I'm sure it won't stop raining for hours. But I shall be perfectly dry in my rain-coat,—no matter how much you may despise it."

"You're not a-going to do anything of the kind," cried Mrs. Jenney from the doorway. "Supper's all ready, and you're going to walk right in."

"Oh, I really have to go," Victoria exclaimed.

"Now I know it ain't as grand as you'd get at home," said Mr. Jenney. "It ain't what *we'd* give you, Miss Victoria,—that's only simple home fare,—it's what *you'd* give us. It's the honour of having you," he added,—and Victoria thought that no courtier could have worded an invitation better. She would not be missed at Fairview. Her mother was inaccessible at this hour, and the servants would think of her as dining at Leith. The picture of the great, lonely house, of the ceremonious dinner which awaited her single presence, gave her an irresistible longing to sit down with these simple, kindly souls. Austen was the only obstacle. He, too, had changed his clothes, and now appeared, smiling at her behind Mrs. Jenney. The look of prospective disappointment in the good woman's face decided Victoria.

"I'll stay, with pleasure," she said.

Mr. Jenney pronounced grace. Victoria sat across the table from Austen, and several times the consciousness of his grave look upon her as she talked heightened the colour in her cheek. He said but little during the meal. Victoria heard how well Mrs. Jenney's oldest son was doing in Springfield, and how the unmarried daughter was teaching, now, in the West. Asked about Europe,—that land of perpetual mystery to the native American,—the girl spoke so simply and vividly of some of the wonders she had seen that she held the older people entranced long after the meal was finished. But at length she observed, with a start, the gathering darkness. In the momentary happiness of this experience, she had been forgetful.

"I will drive home with you, if you'll allow me," said Austen.

"Oh, no, I really don't need an escort, Mr. Vane. I'm

so used to driving about at night, I never think of it," she answered.

"Of course he'll drive home with you, dear," said Mrs. Jenney. "And, Jabe, you'll hitch up and go and fetch Austen back."

"Certain," Mr. Jenney agreed.

The rain had ceased, and the indistinct outline of the trees and fences betrayed the facts that the clouds were already thinning under the moon. Austen had lighted the side lamps of the runabout, revealing the shining pools on the road as they drove along—for the first few minutes in silence.

"It was very good of you to stay," he said; "you do not know how much pleasure you have given them."

Her feminine appreciation responded to the tact of this remark: it was so distinctly what he should have said! How delicate, she thought, must be his understanding of her, that he should have spoken so!

"I was glad to stay," she answered, in a low voice. "I—enjoyed it, too."

"They have very little in their lives," he said, and added, with a characteristic touch, "I do not mean to say that your coming would not be an event in any household."

She laughed with him, softly, at this sally.

"Not to speak of the visit you are making them," she replied.

"Oh, I'm one of the family," he said; "I come and go. Jabe's is my country house, when I can't stand the city any longer."

She saw that he did not intend to tell her why he had left Ripton on this occasion. There fell another silence. They were like prisoners, and each strove to explore the

bounds of their captivity: each sought a lawful ground of communication. Victoria suddenly remembered—with an access of indignation—her father's words, "I do not know what sort he is, but he is not my sort." Awhile ago, and she had blamed herself vehemently for coming to Jabe Jenney's, and now the act had suddenly become sanctified in her sight. She did not analyse her feeling for Austen, but she was consumed with a fierce desire that justice should be done him. "He was honourable—honourable!" she found herself repeating under her breath. No man or woman could look into his face, take his hand, sit by his side, without feeling that he was as dependable as the stars in their courses. And her father should know this, must be made to know it. This man was to be distinguished from opportunists and self-seekers, from fanatics who strike at random. His chief possession was a priceless one—a conscience.

As for Austen, it sufficed him for the moment that he had been lifted, by another seeming caprice of fortune, to a seat of torture the agony whereof was exquisite. An hour, and only the ceaseless pricking memory of it would abide. The barriers had risen higher since he had seen her last, but still he might look into her face and know the radiance of her presence. Could he only trust himself to guard his tongue! But the heart on such occasions will cheat language of its meaning.

"What have you been doing since I saw you last?" she asked. "It seems that you still continue to lead a life of violence."

"Sometimes I wish I did," he answered, with a laugh; "the humdrum existence of getting practice enough to keep a horse is not the most exciting in the world. To what particular deed of violence do you refer?"

"The last achievement, which is in everyone's mouth, that of—assisting Mr. Tooting downstairs."

"I have been defamed," Austen laughed; "he fell down, I believe. But as I have a somewhat evil reputation, and as he came out of my entry, people draw their own conclusions. I can't imagine who told you that story."

"Never mind," she answered. "You see, I have certain sources of information about you."

He tingled over this, and puzzled over it so long that she laughed.

"Does that surprise you?" she asked. "I fail to see why I should be expected to lose all interest in my friends—even if they appear to have lost interest in me."

"Oh, don't say that!" he cried so sharply that she wished her words unsaid. "You can't mean it! You don't know!"

She trembled at the vigorous passion he put into the words.

"No, I don't mean it," she said gently.

The wind had made a rent in the sheet of the clouds, and through it burst the moon in her full glory, flooding field and pasture, and the black stretches of pine forest at their feet. Below them the land fell away, and fell again to the distant broadening valley, to where a mist of white vapour hid the course of the Blue. And beyond, the hills rose again, tier upon tier, to the shadowy outline of Sawanec herself against the hurrying clouds and the light-washed sky. Victoria, gazing at the scene, drew a deep breath, and turned and looked at him in the quick way which he remembered so well.

"Sometimes," she said, "it is so beautiful that it *hurts* to look at it. You love it—do you ever feel that way?"

"Yes," he said, but his answer was more than the monosyllable. "I can see that mountain from my window, and it seriously interferes with my work. I really ought to move into another building."

There was a little catch in her laugh.

"And I watch it," she continued, "I watch it from the pine grove by the hour. Sometimes it smiles, and sometimes it is sad, and sometimes it is far, far away, so remote and mysterious that I wonder if it is ever to come back and smile again."

"Have you ever seen the sunrise from its peak?" said Austen.

"No. Oh, how I should love to see it!" she exclaimed.

"Yes, you would like to see it," he answered simply. He would like to take her there, to climb, with her hand in his, the well-known paths in the darkness, to reach the summit in the rosy-fingered dawn: to see her stand on the granite at his side in the full glory of the red light, and to show her a world which she was henceforth to share with him.

Some such image, some such vision of his figure on the rock, may have been in her mind as she turned her face again toward the mountain.

"You are cold," he said, reaching for the mackintosh in the back of the trap.

"No," she said. But she stopped the horse and acquiesced by slipping her arms into the coat, and he felt upon his hand the caress of a stray wisp of hair at her neck. Under a spell of thought and feeling, seemingly laid by the magic of the night, neither spoke for a space. And then Victoria summoned her forces, and turned to him again. Her tone bespoke the subtle intimacy that

always sprang up between them, despite bars and conventions.

"I was sure you would understand why I wrote you from New York," she said, "although I hesitated a long time before doing so. It was very stupid of me not to realise the scruples which made you refuse to be a candidate for the governorship, and I wanted to—to apologise."

"It wasn't necessary," said Austen, "but—I valued the note." The words seemed so absurdly inadequate to express his appreciation of the treasure which he carried with him, at that moment, in his pocket. "But, really," he added, smiling at her in the moonlight, "I must protest against your belief that I could have been an effective candidate! I have roamed about the State, and I have made some very good friends here and there among the hill farmers, like Mr. Jenney. Mr. Redbrook is one of these. But it would have been absurd of me even to think of a candidacy founded on personal friendships. I assure you," he added, smiling, "there was no self-denial in my refusal."

She gave him an appraising glance which he found at once enchanting and disconcerting.

"You are one of those people, I think, who do not know their own value. If I were a man, and such men as Mr. Redbrook and Mr. Jenney knew me and believed sufficiently in me and in my integrity of purpose to ask me to be their candidate" (here she hesitated an instant), "and I believed that the cause were a good one, I should not have felt justified in refusing. That is what I meant. I have always thought of you as a man of force and a man of action. But I did not see—the obstacle in your way." She hesitated once more, and added, with a courage which

did not fail of its direct appeal, "I did not realise that you would be publicly opposing your father. And I did not realise that you would not care to criticise—mine."

On the last word she faltered and glanced at his profile. Had she gone too far?

"I felt that you would understand," he answered. He could not trust himself to speak further. How much did she know? And how much was she capable of grasping?

His reticence served only to fortify her trust—to elevate it. It was impossible for her not to feel something of that which was in him and crying for utterance. She was a woman. And if this one action had been but the holding of her coat, she would have known. A man who could keep silent under these conditions must indeed be a rock of might and honour; and she felt sure now, with a surging of joy, that the light she had seen shining from it was the beacon of truth. A question trembled on her lips—the question for which she had long been gathering strength. Whatever the outcome of this communion, she felt that there must be absolute truth between them.

"I want to ask you something, Mr. Vane—I have been wanting to for a long time."

She saw the muscles of his jaw tighten,—a manner he had when earnest or determined,—and she wondered in agitation whether he divined what she was going to say. He turned his face slowly to hers, and his eyes were troubled.

"Yes," he said.

"You have always spared my feelings," she went on. "Now—now I am asking for the truth—as you see it. Do the Northeastern Railroads wrongfully govern this State for their own ends?"

Austen, too, as he thought over it afterwards, in the night, was surprised at her concise phrasing, suggestive, as it was, of much reflection. But at the moment, although he had been prepared for and had braced himself against something of this nature, he was nevertheless overcome by the absolute and fearless directness of her speech.

"That is a question," he answered, "which you will have to ask your father."

"I have asked him," she said, in a low voice; "I want to know what—you believe."

"You have asked him!" he repeated, in astonishment.

"Yes. You mustn't think that, in asking you, I am unfair to him in any way—or that I doubt his sincerity. We have been" (her voice caught a little) "the closest friends ever since I was a child." She paused. "But I want to know what you believe."

The fact that she emphasised the last pronoun sent another thrill through him. Did it, then, make any difference to her what he believed? Did she mean to differentiate him from out of the multitude? He had to steady himself before he answered:—

"I have sometimes thought that my own view might not be broad enough."

She turned to him again.

"Why are you evading?" she asked. "I am sure it is not because you have not settled convictions. And I have asked you—a favour."

"You have done me an honour," he answered, and faced her suddenly. "You must see," he cried, with a power and passion in his voice that startled and thrilled her in turn, "you must see that it's because I wish to be fair that I hesitate. I would tell you—anything. I do not agree with my own father,—we have been—apart

—for years because of this. And I do not agree with Mr. Flint. I am sure that they both are wrong. But I cannot help seeing their point of view. These practices are the result of an evolution, of an evolution of their time. They were forced to cope with conditions in the way they did, or go to the wall. They make the mistake of believing that the practices are still necessary to-day.”

“Oh!” she exclaimed, a great hope rising within her at these words. “Oh, and you believe they are not!” His explanation seemed so simple, so inspiring. And above and beyond that, he was sure. Conviction rang in every word. Had he not, she remembered, staked his career by disagreeing with his father? Yes, and he had been slow to condemn; he had seen their side. It was they who condemned him. He must have justice—he should have it!

“I believe such practices are not necessary now,” he said firmly. “A new generation has come—a generation more jealous of its political rights, and not so willing to be rid of them by farming them out. A change has taken place even in the older men, like Mr. Jenney and Mr. Redbrook, who simply did not think about these questions ten years ago. Men of this type, who could be leaders, are ready to assume their responsibilities, are ready to deal fairly with railroads and citizens alike. This is a matter of belief. I believe it—Mr. Flint and my father do not. They see the politicians, and I see the people. I belong to one generation, and they to another. With the convictions they have, added to the fact that they are in a position of heavy responsibility toward the owners of their property, they cannot be blamed for hesitating to try any experiments.”

“And the practices are—bad?” Victoria asked.

"They are entirely subversive of the principles of American government, to say the least," replied Austen, grimly. He was thinking of the pass which Mr. Flint had sent him, and of the kind of men Mr. Flint employed to make the practices effective.

They descended into the darkness of a deep valley, scored out between the hills by one of the rushing tributaries of the Blue. The moon fell down behind the opposite ridge, and the road ran through a deep forest. He no longer saw the shades of meaning in her face, but in the blackness of Erebus he could have sensed her presence at his side. Speech, though of this strange kind of which neither felt the strangeness, had come and gone between them, and now silence spoke as eloquently. Twice or thrice their eyes met through the gloom, and there was light. At length she spoke with the impulsiveness in her voice that he found so appealing.

"You must see my father—you must talk to him. He doesn't know how fair you are!"

To Austen the inference was obvious that Mr. Flint had conceived for him a special animosity, which he must have mentioned to Victoria, and this inference opened the way to a wide speculation in which he was at once elated and depressed. Why had he been so singled out? And had Victoria defended him? Once before he remembered that she had told him he must see Mr. Flint. They had gained the ridge now, and the moon had risen again for them, striking black shadows from the maples on the granite-cropped pastures. A little farther on was a road which might have been called the rear entrance to Fairview.

What was he to say?

"I am afraid Mr. Flint has other things to do than to

see me," he answered. "If he wished to see me, he would say so."

"Would you go to see him, if he were to ask you?" said Victoria.

"Yes," he replied, "but that is not likely to happen. Indeed, you are giving my opinion entirely too much importance in your father's eyes," he added, with an attempt to carry it off lightly; "there is no more reason why he should care to discuss the subject with me than with any other citizen of the State of my age who thinks as I do."

"Oh, yes, there is," said Victoria; "he regards you as a person whose opinion has some weight. I am sure of that. He thinks of you as a person of convictions—and he has heard things about you. You talked to him once," she went on, astonished at her own boldness, "and made him angry. Why don't you talk to him again?" she cried, seeing that Austen was silent. "I am sure that what you said about the change of public opinion in the State would appeal to him. And oh, don't quarrel with him! You have a faculty of differing with people without quarrelling with them. My father has so many cares, and he tries so hard to do right as he sees it. You must remember that he was a poor farmer's son, and that he began to work at fourteen in Brampton, running errands for a country printer. He never had any advantages except those he made for himself, and he had to fight his way in a hard school against men who were not always honourable. It is no wonder that he sometimes takes—a material view of things. But he is reasonable and willing to listen to what other men have to say, if he is not antagonised."

"I understand," said Austen, who thought Mr. Flint blest in his advocate. Indeed, Victoria's simple reference to her father's origin had touched him deeply. "I under-

stand, but I cannot go to him. There is every reason why I cannot," he added, and she knew that he was speaking with difficulty, as under great emotion.

"But if he should send for you?" she asked. She felt his look fixed upon her with a strange intensity, and her heart leaped as she dropped her eyes.

"If Mr. Flint should send for me," he answered slowly, "I would come—and gladly. But it must be of his own free will."

Victoria repeated the words over to herself, "It must be of his own free will," waiting until she should be alone to seek their full interpretation. She turned, and looked across the lawn at Fairview House shining in the light. In another minute they had drawn up before the open door.

"Won't you come in—and wait for Mr. Jenney?" she asked.

He gazed down into her face, searchingly, and took her hand.

"Good night," he said; "Mr. Jenney is not far behind. I think—I think I should like the walk."

CHAPTER V.

MR. CREWE: AN APPRECIATION.*

It is given to some rare mortals with whom fame precedes grey hairs or baldness to read, while still on the rising tide of their efforts, that portion of their lives which

* Paul Pardriff, Ripton. Sent post free, on application, to voters and others.

has already been inscribed on the scroll of history—or something like it. Mr. Crewe in kilts at five; and (prophetic picture!) with a train of cars which—so the family tradition runs—was afterwards demolished; Mr. Crewe at fourteen, in delicate health; this picture was taken abroad, with a long-suffering tutor who could speak feelingly, if he would, of embryo geniuses. Even at this early period Humphrey Crewe's thirst for knowledge was insatiable: he cared little, the biography tells us, for galleries and churches and ruins, but his comments upon foreign methods of doing business were astonishingly precocious. He recommended to amazed clerks in provincial banks the use of cheques, ridiculed to speechless station-masters the side-entrance railway carriage with its want of room, and the size of the goods trucks. He is said to have been the first to suggest that soda-water fountains might be run at a large profit in London.

In college, in addition to keeping up his classical courses, he found time to make an exhaustive study of the railroads of the United States, embodying these ideas in a pamphlet published shortly after graduation. This pamphlet is now, unfortunately, very rare, but the anonymous biographer managed to get one and quote from it. If Mr. Crewe's suggestions had been carried out, seventy-five per cent of the railroad accidents might have been eliminated. *Thorough* was his watchword even then. And even at that period he foresaw, with the prophecy of genius, the days of single-track congestion.

His efforts to improve Leith and the State in general, to ameliorate the condition of his neighbours, were fittingly and delicately dwelt upon. A desire to take upon himself the burden of citizenship led—as we know—to further

self-denial. He felt called upon to go to the Legislature—and this is what he saw:—

(Mr. Crewe is quoted here at length in an admirable, concise, and hair-raising statement given in an interview to his biographer. But we have been with him, and know what he saw. It is, for lack of space, reluctantly omitted.)

And now we are to take up Mr. Crewe's career where the biography left off; to relate, in a chapter if possible, one of the most remarkable campaigns in the history of this country. A certain reformer of whose acquaintance the honest chronicler boasts (a reformer who got elected!) found, on his first visit to the headquarters he had hired—two citizens under the influence of liquor and a little girl with a skip rope. Such are the beginnings that try men's souls.

The window of every independent shopkeeper in Ripton contained a large-sized picture of the Leith statesman, his determined chin slightly thrust down into the Gladstone collar. Underneath were the words, "*I will put an end to graft and railroad rule. I am a Candidate of the People. Opening rally of the People's Campaign at the Opera House, at 8 P.M., July 10th. The Hon. Humphrey Crewe, of Leith, will tell the citizens of Ripton how their State is governed.*"

"Father," said Victoria, as she read this announcement (three columns wide, in the *Ripton Record*) as they sat at breakfast together, "do you mind my going? I can get Hastings Weare to take me."

"Not at all," said Mr. Flint, who had returned from New York in a better frame of mind. "I should like a trustworthy account of that meeting. Only," he added, "I should advise you to go early, Victoria, in order to get a seat."

"You don't object to my listening to criticism of you?"

"Not by Humphrey Crewe," laughed Mr. Flint.

Early suppers instead of dinners were the rule at Leith on the evening of the historic day, and the candidate himself, in his red Leviathan, was not inconsiderably annoyed, on the way to Ripton, by innumerable carryalls and traps filled with brightly gowned recruits of that organisation of Mrs. Pomfret's which Beatrice Chillingham had nicknamed "The Ladies' Auxiliary." In vain Mr. Crewe tooted his horn: the sound of it was drowned by the gay talk and laughter in the carryalls, and shrieks ensued when the Leviathan cut by with only six inches to spare, and the candidate turned and addressed the drivers in language more forceful than polite, and told the ladies they acted as if they were going to a Punch-and-Judy show.

"Poor dear Humphrey!" said Mrs. Pomfret, "is so much in earnest. I wouldn't give a snap for a man without a temper."

"Poor dear Humphrey!" said Beatrice Chillingham, in an undertone to her neighbour, "is exceedingly rude and ungrateful. That's what I think."

The occupants of one vehicle heard the horn, and sought the top of a grassy mound to let the Leviathan go by. And the Leviathan, with characteristic contrariness, stopped.

"Hello," said Mr. Crewe, with a pull at his cap. "I intended to be on the look-out for you."

"That is very thoughtful, Humphrey, considering how many things you have to be on the look-out for this evening," Victoria replied.

"That's all right," was Mr. Crewe's gracious reply. "I knew you'd be sufficiently broad-minded to come, and

I hope you won't take offence at certain remarks I think it my duty to make."

"Don't let my presence affect you," she answered, smiling; "I have come prepared for anything."

"I'll tell Tooting to give you a good seat," he called back, as he started onward.

Hastings Weare looked up at her, with laughter-brimming eyes.

"Victoria, you're a wonder!" he remarked. "Say, do you remember that tall fellow we met at Humphrey's party, Austen Vane?"

"Yes."

"I saw him on the street in Ripton the other day, and he came right up and spoke to me. He hadn't forgotten my name. Now, he'd be my notion of a candidate. He makes you feel as if your presence in the world meant something to him."

"I think he does feel that way," replied Victoria.

"I don't blame him if he feels that way about you," said Hastings, who made love openly.

"Hastings," she answered, "when you get a little older, you will learn to confine yourself to your own opinions."

"When I do," he retorted audaciously, "they never make you blush like that."

"It's probably because you have never learned to be original," she replied. But Hastings had been set to thinking.

Mrs. Pomfret, with her foresight and her talent for management, had given the Ladies' Auxiliary notice that they were not to go farther forward than the twelfth row. She herself, with some especially favoured ones, occupied a box, which was the nearest thing to being on the stage. One unforeseen result of Mrs. Pomfret's arrangement

was that the first eleven rows were vacant, with the exception of one old man and five or six schoolboys. Such is the courage of humanity in general! On the arrival of the candidate, instead of a surging crowd lining the sidewalk, he found only a fringe of the curious, whose usual post of observation was the railroad station, standing silently on the curb. Within, Mr. Tooting's duties as an usher had not been onerous. He met Mr. Crewe in the vestibule, and drew him into the private office.

"The railroad's fixed 'em," said the manager, indignantly, but *sotto voce*: "I've found that out. Hilary Vane had the word passed around town that if they came, something would fall on 'em. The Tredways and all the people who own factories served notice on their men that if they paid any attention to this meeting they'd lose their job. But say, the people are watchin' you, just the same."

"How many people are in there?" Mr. Crewe demanded.

"Twenty-seven, when I came out," said Mr. Tooting, with commendable accuracy. "But it wants fifteen minutes to eight."

"And who," asked Mr. Crewe, "is to introduce me?"

An expression of indignation spread over Mr. Tooting's face.

"There ain't a man in Ripton's got sand enough!" he exclaimed. "Sol Gridley was a-goin' to, but he went to New York on the noon train. I guess it's a pleasure trip," Mr. Tooting hinted darkly.

"Why," said Mr. Crewe, "he's the fellow—"

"Exactly," Mr. Tooting replied, "and he did get a lot of 'em, travelling about. But Sol has got to work on the

quiet, you understand. He feels he can't come out right away."

"And how about Amos Ricketts? Where's he?"

"Amos," said Mr. Tooting, regretfully, "was taken very sudden about five o'clock. One of his spells come on, and he sent me word to the Ripton House. He had his speech all made up, and it was a good one, too. He was going to tell folks pretty straight how the railroad beat him for mayor."

Mr. Crewe made a gesture of disgust.

"I'll introduce myself," he said. "They all know me, anyhow."

"Say," said Mr. Tooting, laying a hand on his candidate's arm. "You couldn't do any better. I've been for that all along."

"Hold on," said Mr. Crewe, listening, "a lot of people are coming in now."

What Mr. Crewe had heard, however, was the arrival of the Ladies' Auxiliary, five and thirty strong, from Leith. But stay! Who are these coming? More ladies—ladies in groups of two and three and five! ladies of Ripton whose husbands, for some unexplained reason, have stayed at home; and Mr. Tooting, as he watched them with mingled feelings, became a woman's suffragist on the spot. He dived into the private office once more, where he found Mr. Crewe seated with his legs crossed, calmly reading a last winter's playbill. (Note for a more complete biography.)

"Well, Tooting," he said, "I thought they'd begin to come."

"They're mostly women," Mr. Tooting informed him.

"Women!"

"Hold on!" said Mr. Tooting, who had the true show-

man's instinct. "Can't you see that folks are curious? They're afraid to come 'emselves, and they're sendin' their wives and daughters. If you get the women tonight, they'll go home and club the men into line."

Eight strokes boomed out from the tower of the neighbouring town hall, and an expectant flutter spread over the audience,—a flutter which disseminated faint odours of sachet and other mysterious substances in which feminine apparel is said to be laid away. The stage was empty, save for a table which held a pitcher of water and a glass.

"It's a pretty good imitation of a *matinée*," Hastings Weare remarked. "I wonder whom the front seats are reserved for. Say, Victoria, there's your friend Mr. Vane in the corner. He's looking over here."

"He has a perfect right to look where he chooses," said Victoria. She wondered whether he would come over and sit next to her if she turned around, and decided instantly that he wouldn't. Presently, when she thought Hastings was off his guard, she did turn, to meet, as she expected, Austen's glance fixed upon her. Their greeting was the signal of two people with a mutual understanding. He did not rise, and although she acknowledged to herself a feeling of disappointment, she gave him credit for a nice comprehension of the situation. Beside him was his friend Tom Gaylord, who presented to her a very puzzled face. And then, if there had been a band, it would have been time to play "See, the Conquering Hero Comes!"

Why wasn't there a band? No such mistake, Mr. Tooting vowed, should be made at the next rally.

It was Mrs. Pomfret who led the applause from her

box as the candidate walked modestly up the side aisle and presently appeared, alone, on the stage. The flutter of excitement was renewed, and this time it might almost be called a flutter of apprehension. But we who have heard Mr. Crewe speak are in no alarm for our candidate. He takes a glass of iced water; he arranges, with the utmost *sang-froid*, his notes on the desk and adjusts the reading-light. Then he steps forward and surveys the scattered groups.

"Ladies —" a titter ran through the audience,—a titter which started somewhere in the near neighbourhood of Mr. Hastings Weare—and rose instantly to several hysterical peals of feminine laughter. Mrs. Pomfret, outraged, sweeps the frivolous offenders with her lorgnette; Mr. Crewe, with his arm resting on the reading-desk, merely raises the palm of his hand to a perpendicular reproof, "—and gentlemen." At this point the audience is thoroughly cowed. "Ladies and gentlemen and fellow-citizens. I thank you for the honour you have done me in coming here to listen to the opening speech of my campaign to-night. It is a campaign for decency and good government, and I know that the common people of the State—of whom I have the honour to be one—demand these things. I cannot say as much for the so-called prominent citizens," said Mr. Crewe, glancing about him; "not one of your prominent citizens in Ripton would venture to offend the powers that be by consenting to introduce me to-night, or dared come into this theatre and take seats within thirty feet of this platform." Here Mr. Crewe let his eyes rest significantly on the eleven empty rows, while his hearers squirmed in terrified silence at this audacity. Even the Ripton women knew that this was high treason beneath the walls of the citadel, and many

of them glanced furtively at the strangely composed daughter of Augustus P. Flint.

"I will show you that I can stand on my own feet," Mr. Crewe continued. "I will introduce myself. I am Humphrey Crewe of Leith, and I claim to have added something to the welfare and prosperity of this State, and I intend to add more before I have finished."

At this point, as might have been expected, spontaneous applause broke forth, originating in the right-hand stage box. Here was a daring defiance indeed, a courage of such a high order that it completely carried away the ladies and drew reluctant plaudits from the male element. "Give it to 'em, Humphrey!" said one of those who happened to be sitting next to Miss Flint, and who received a very severe pinch in the arm in consequence.

"I thank the gentleman," answered Mr. Crewe, "and I propose to—(*Handclapping and satchet.*) I propose to show that you spend something like two hundred thousand dollars a year to elect legislators and send 'em to the capital, when the real government of your State is in a room in the Pelican Hotel known as the Railroad Room, and the real governor is a citizen of your town, the Honourable Hilary Vane, who sits there and acts for his master, Mr. Augustus P. Flint of New York. And I propose to prove to you that, before the Honourable Adam B. Hunt appeared as that which has come to be known as the 'regular' candidate, Mr. Flint sent for him to go to New York and exacted certain promises from him. Not that it was necessary, but the Northeastern Railroads never take any chances. (*Laughter.*) The Honourable Adam B. Hunt is what they call a 'safe' man, meaning by that a man who will do what Mr. Flint wants him to do. While I am not 'safe' because I have dared to defy them

in your name, and will do what the people want me to do. (*Clapping and cheers from a gentleman in the darkness, afterwards identified as Mr. Tooting.*) Now, my friends, are you going to continue to allow a citizen of New York to nominate your governors, and do you intend, tamely, to give the Honourable Adam B. Hunt your votes?"

"They ain't got any votes," said a voice—not that of Mr. Hastings Weare, for it came from the depths of the gallery.

"The hand that rocks the cradle sways the world," answered Mr. Crewe, and there was no doubt about the sincerity of the applause this time.

"The campaign of the Honourable Humphrey Crewe of Leith," said the *State Tribune* next day, "was inaugurated at the Opera House in Ripton last night before an enthusiastic audience consisting of Mr. Austen Vane, Mr. Thomas Gaylord, Jr., Mr. Hamilton Tooting, two reporters, and seventy-four ladies, who cheered the speaker to the echo. About half of these ladies were summer residents of Leith in charge of the well-known social leader, Mrs. Patterson Pomfret,—an organised league which, it is understood, will follow the candidate about the State in the English fashion, kissing the babies and teaching the mothers hygienic cooking and how to *ondulé* the hair."

After speaking for an hour and a half, the Honourable Humphrey Crewe declared that he would be glad to meet any of the audience who wished to shake his hand, and it was Mrs. Pomfret who reached him first.

"Don't be discouraged, Humphrey,—you are magnificent," she whispered.

"Discouraged!" echoed Mr. Crewe. "You can't kill

an idea, and we'll see who's right and who's wrong before I get through with 'em."

"What a noble spirit!" Mrs. Pomfret exclaimed aside to Mrs. Chillingham. Then she added, in a louder tone, "Ladies, if you will kindly tell me your names, I shall be happy to introduce you to the candidate. Well, Victoria, I didn't expect to see *you* here."

"Why not?" said Victoria. "Humphrey, accept my congratulations."

"Did you like it?" asked Mr. Crewe. "I thought it was a pretty good speech myself. There's nothing like telling the truth, you know. And, by the way, I hope to see you in a day or two, before I start for Kingston. Telephone me when you come down to Leith."

The congratulations bestowed on the candidate by the daughter of the president of the Northeastern Railroads quite took the breath out of the spectators who witnessed the incident, and gave rise to the wildest conjectures. And the admiration of Mr. Hastings Weare was unbounded.

"You've got the most magnificent nerve I ever saw, Victoria," he exclaimed, as they made their way towards the door.

"You forget Humphrey," she replied.

Hastings looked at her and chuckled. In fact, he chuckled all the way home. In the vestibule they met Mr. Austen Vane and Mr. Thomas Gaylord, the latter coming forward with a certain palpable embarrassment. All through the evening Tom had been trying to account for her presence at the meeting, until Austen had begged him to keep his speculations to himself. "She can't be engaged to *him*!" Mr. Gaylord had exclaimed more than once, under his breath. "Why not?" Austen had

answered; "there's a good deal about him to admire." "Because she's got more sense," said Tom doggedly. Hence he was at a loss for words when she greeted him.

"Well, Mr. Gaylord," she said, "you see no bones were broken, after all. But I appreciated your precaution in sending the buggy behind me, although it wasn't necessary."

"I felt somewhat responsible," replied Tom, and words failed him. "Here's Austen Vane," he added, indicating by a nod of the head the obvious presence of that gentleman. "You'll excuse me. There's a man here I want to see."

"What's the matter with Mr. Gaylord?" Victoria asked. "He seems so—queer."

They were standing apart, alone, Hastings Weare having gone to the stables for the runabout.

"Mr. Gaylord imagines he doesn't get along with the opposite sex," Austen replied, with just a shade of constraint.

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Victoria; "we got along perfectly the other day when he rescued me from the bushes. What's the matter with him?"

Austen laughed, and their eyes met.

"I think he is rather surprised to see you here," he said.

"And you?" returned Victoria. "Aren't you equally—out of place?"

He did not care to go into an explanation of Tom's suspicion in regard to Mr. Crewe.

"My curiosity was too much for me," he replied, smiling.

"So was mine," she replied, and suddenly demanded: "What did you think of Humphrey's speech?"

Their eyes met. And despite the attempted seriousness of her tone they joined in an irresistible and spontaneous

laughter. They were again on that plane of mutual understanding and intimacy for which neither could account.

"I have no criticism to make of Mr. Crewe as an orator, at least," he said.

Then she grew serious again, and regarded him steadfastly.

"And—what he said?" she asked.

Austen wondered again at the courage she had displayed. All he had been able to think of in the theatre, while listening to Mr. Crewe's words of denunciation of the Northeastern Railroads, had been of the effect they might have on Victoria's feelings, and from time to time he had glanced anxiously at her profile. And now, looking into her face, questioning, trustful—he could not even attempt to evade. He was silent.

"I shouldn't have asked you that," she said. "One reason I came was because—because I wanted to hear the worst. You were too considerate to tell me—all."

He looked mutely into her eyes, and a great desire arose in him to be able to carry her away from it all. Many times within the past year, when the troubles and complications of his life had weighed upon him, his thoughts had turned to that Western country, limited only by the bright horizons where the sun rose and set. If he could only take her there, or into his own hills, where no man might follow them! It was a primeval longing, and, being a woman and the object of it, she saw its essential meaning in his face. For a brief moment they stood as completely alone as on the crest of Sawanec.

"Good night," she said, in a low voice.

He did not trust himself to speak at once, but went down the steps with her to the curb, where Hastings Weare was waiting in the runabout.

"I was just telling Miss Flint," said that young gentleman, "that you would have been my candidate."

Austen's face relaxed.

"Thank you, Mr. Weare," he said simply; and to Victoria, "Good night."

At the corner, when she turned, she saw him still standing on the edge of the sidewalk, his tall figure thrown into bold relief by the light which flooded from the entrance.

The account of the Ripton meeting, substantially as it appeared in the *State Tribune*, was by a singular coincidence copied at once into sixty-odd weekly newspapers, and must have caused endless merriment throughout the State. Congressman Fairplay's prophecy of "negligible" was an exaggeration, and one gentleman who had rashly predicted that Mr. Crewe would get twenty delegates out of a thousand hid himself for shame. On the whole, the "monumental farce" forecast seemed best to fit the situation. A conference was held at Leith between the candidate, Mr. Tooting, and the Honourable Timothy Watling of Newcastle, who was preparing the nominating speech, although the convention was more than two months distant. Mr. Watling was skilled in rounded periods of oratory and in other things political, and both he and Mr. Tooting reiterated their opinion that there was no particle of doubt about Mr. Crewe's nomination.

"But we'll have to fight fire with fire," Mr. Tooting declared. It was probably an accident that he happened to kick, at this instant, Mr. Watling under cover of the table. Mr. Watling was an old and valued friend.

"Gentlemen," said Mr. Crewe, "I haven't the slightest doubt of my nomination, either. I do not hesitate to say, however, that the expenses of this campaign, at this early

stage, seem to me out of all proportion. Let me see what you have there."

The Honourable Timothy Watling had produced a typewritten list containing some eighty towns and wards, each followed by a name and the number of the delegates therefrom—and figures.

"They'd all be enthusiastic Crewe men—if they could be seen by the right party," declared Mr. Tooting.

Mr. Crewe ran his eye over the list.

"Whom would you suggest to see 'em?" he asked coldly.

"There's only one party I know of that has much influence over 'em," Mr. Tooting replied, with a genial but deferential indication of his friend.

At this point Mr. Crewe's secretary left the room on an errand, and the three statesmen went into executive session. In politics, as in charity, it is a good rule not to let one's right hand know what the left hand doeth. Half an hour later the three emerged into the sunlight, Mr. Tooting and Mr. Watling smoking large cigars.

"You've got a great lay-out here, Mr. Crewe," Mr. Watling remarked. "It must have stood you in a little money, eh? Yes, I'll get mileage books, and you'll hear from me every day or two."

And now we come to the infinitely difficult task of relating in a whirlwind manner the story of a whirlwind campaign—a campaign that was to make the oldest resident sit up and take notice. In the space of four short weeks a miracle had begun to show itself. First, there was the Kingston meeting, with the candidate, his thumb in his watch-pocket, seated in an open carriage beside Mr. Hamilton Tooting,—a carriage draped with a sheet on which was painted "Down with Railroad Ring Rule!" The carriage was preceded by the Kingston Brass Band,

producing throbbing martial melodies, and followed (we are not going to believe the *State Tribune* any longer) by a jostling and cheering crowd. The band halts before the G. A. R. Hall; the candidate alights, with a bow of acknowledgment, and goes to the private office until the musicians are seated in front of the platform, when he enters to renewed cheering and the tune of "See, the Conquering Hero Comes!"

An honest historian must admit that there were two accounts of this meeting. Both agree that Mr. Crewe introduced himself, and poured a withering sarcasm on the heads of Kingston's prominent citizens. One account, which the ill-natured declared to be in Mr. Tooting's style, and which appeared (in slightly larger type than that of the other columns) in the Kingston and local papers, stated that the hall was crowded to suffocation, and that the candidate was "accorded an ovation which lasted for fully five minutes."

Mr. Crewe's speech was printed—in this slightly larger type. Woe to the Honourable Adam B. Hunt, who had gone to New York to see whether he could be governor! Why didn't he come out on the platform? Because he couldn't. "Safe" candidates couldn't talk. His subservient and fawning reports on accidents while chairman of the Railroad Commission were ruthlessly quoted (amid cheers and laughter). What kind of railroad service was Kingston getting compared to what it should have? Compared, indeed, to what it had twenty years ago? An informal reception was held afterwards.

More meetings followed, at the rate of four a week, in county after county. At the end of fifteen days a selectman (whose name will go down in history) voluntarily mounted the platform and introduced the Honourable

Humphrey Crewe to the audience; not, to be sure, as the saviour of the State; and from that day onward Mr. Crewe did not lack for a sponsor. On the other hand, the sponsors became more pronounced, and at Harwich (a free-thinking district) a whole board of selectmen and five prominent citizens sat gravely beside the candidate in the town hall.

CHAPTER VI.

ST. GILES OF THE BLAMELESS LIFE.

THE burden of the valley of vision: woe to the Honourable Adam B. Hunt! Where is he all this time? On the porch of his home in Edmundton, smoking cigars, little heeding the rising of the waters; receiving visits from the Honourables Brush Bascom, Nat Billings, and Jacob Botcher, and signing cheques to the order of these gentlemen for necessary expenses. Be it known that the Honourable Adam was a man of substance in this world's goods. To quote from Mr. Crewe's speech at Hull: "The Northeastern Railroads confer—they do not pay, except in passes. Of late years their books may be searched in vain for evidence of the use of political funds. The man upon whom they choose to confer your governorship is always able to pay the pipers." (Purposely put in the plural.)

Have the pipers warned the Honourable Adam of the rising tide against him? Have they asked him to gird up his loins and hire halls and smite the upstart hip and thigh? They have warned him, yes, that the expenses may be a little greater than ordinary. But it is not for

him to talk, or to bestir himself in any unseemly manner, for the prize which he was to have was in the nature of a gift. In vain did Mr. Crewe cry out to him four times a week for his political beliefs, for a statement of what he would do if he were elected governor. The Honourable Adam's dignified answer was that he had always been a good Republican, and would die one. Following a time-honoured custom, he refused to say anything, but it was rumoured that he believed in the gold standard.

It is August, and there is rejoicing in Leith. There is no doubt now that the campaign of the people progresses; no need any more for the true accounts of the meetings, in large print, although these are still continued. The reform rallies resemble *matinées* no longer, and two real reporters accompany Mr. Crewe on his tours. Nay, the campaign of education has already borne fruit, which the candidate did not hesitate to mention in his talks: Edmundton has more trains, Kingston has more trains, and more cars. No need now to stand up for twenty miles on a hot day; and more cars are building, and more engines; likewise some rates have been lowered. And editors who declare that the Northeastern gives the State a pretty good government have, like the guinea pigs, long been suppressed.

In these days were many councils at Fairview and in the offices of the Honourable Hilary Vane at Ripton; councils behind closed doors, from which the councillors emerged with smiling faces that men might not know the misgivings in their hearts; councils, nevertheless, out of which leaked rumours of dissension and recrimination—conditions hitherto unheard of. One post ran to meet another, and one messenger ran to meet another; and it was even reported—though on doubtful authority—after

the rally in his town the Honourable Jacob Botcher had made the remark that, under certain conditions, he might become a reformer.

None of these upsetting rumours, however, were allowed by Mr. Bascóm and other gentlemen close to the Honourable Adam B. Hunt to reach that candidate, who continued to smoke in tranquillity on the porch of his home until the fifteenth day of August. At eight o'clock that morning the postman brought him a letter marked personal, the handwriting on which he recognised as belonging to the Honourable Hilary Vane. For some reason, as he read, the sensations of the Honourable Adam were disquieting; the contents of the letter, to say the least, were peculiar. "To-morrow, at noon precisely, I shall be driving along the Broad Brook road by the abandoned mill three miles towards Edmundton from Hull. I hope you will find it convenient to be there."

These were the strange words the Honourable Hilary had written, and the Honourable Adam knew that it was an order. At that very instant Mr. Hunt had been reading in the *Guardian* the account of an overflow meeting in Newcastle by his opponent, in which Mr. Crewe had made some particularly choice remarks about him, and had been cheered to the echo. The Honourable Adam put the paper down, and walked up the street to talk to Mr. Burrows, the postmaster whom, with the aid of Congressman Fairplay, he had had appointed at Edmundton. The two racked their brains for three hours; and Postmaster Burrows, who was the fortunate possessor of a pass, offered to go down to Ripton in the interest of his liege lord and see what was up. The Honourable Adam, however, decided that he could wait for twenty-four hours.

The morning of the sixteenth dawned clear, as beauti-

ful a summer's day for a drive as any man could wish. But the spirit of the Honourable Adam did not respond to the weather, and he had certain vague forebodings as his horse jogged toward Hull, although these did not take such a definite shape as to make him feel a premonitory pull of his coat-tails. The ruined mill beside the rushing stream was a picturesque spot, and the figure of the Honourable Hilary Vane, seated on the old millstone, in the green and gold shadows of a beech, gave an interesting touch of life to the landscape. The Honourable Adam drew up and eyed his friend and associate of many years before addressing him.

"How are you, Hilary?"

"Hitch your horse," said Mr. Vane.

The Honourable Adam was some time in picking out a convenient tree. Then he lighted a cigar, and approached Mr. Vane, and at length let himself down, cautiously, on the millstone. Sitting on his porch had not improved Mr. Hunt's figure.

"This is kind of mysterious, ain't it, Hilary?" he remarked, with a tug at his goatee.

"I don't know but what it is," admitted Mr. Vane, who did not look as though the coming episode were to give him unqualified joy.

"Fine weather," remarked the Honourable Adam, with a brave attempt at geniality.

"The paper predicts rain to-morrow," said the Honourable Hilary.

"You don't smoke, do you?" asked the Honourable Adam.

"No," said the Honourable Hilary.

A silence, except for the music of the brook over the broken dam.

"Pretty place," said the Honourable Adam; "I kissed my wife here once—before I was married."

This remark, although of interest, the Honourable Hilary evidently thought did not require an answer.

"Adam," said Mr. Vane, presently, "how much money have you spent so far?"

"Well," said Mr. Hunt, "it has been sort of costly, but Brush and the boys tell me the times are uncommon, and I guess they are. If that crazy cuss Crewe hadn't broken loose, it would have been different. Not that I'm uneasy about him, but all this talk of his and newspaper advertising had to be counteracted some. Why, he has a couple of columns a week right here in the *Edmundton Courier*. The papers are bleedin' him to death, certain."

"How much have you spent?" asked the Honourable Hilary.

The Honourable Adam screwed up his face and pulled his goatee thoughtfully.

"What are you trying to get at, Hilary," he inquired, "sending for me to meet you out here in the woods in this curious way? If you wanted to see me, why didn't you get me to go down to Ripton, or come up and sit on my porch? You've been there before."

"Times," said the Honourable Hilary, repeating, perhaps unconsciously, Mr. Hunt's words, "are uncommon. This man Crewe's making more headway than you think. The people don't know him, and he's struck a popular note. It's the fashion to be down on railroads these days."

"I've taken that into account," replied Mr. Hunt. "It's unlucky, and it comes high. I don't think he's got a show for the nomination, but my dander's up, and I'll beat him if I have to mortgage my house."

The Honourable Hilary grunted, and ruminated.

"How much did you say you'd spent, Adam?"

"If you think I'm not free enough, I'll loosen up a little more," said the Honourable Adam.

"How free have you been?" said the Honourable Hilary.

For some reason the question, put in this form, was productive of results.

"I can't say to a dollar, but I've got all the amounts down in a book. I guess somewhere in the neighbourhood of nine thousand would cover it."

Mr. Vane grunted again.

"Would you take a cheque, Adam?" he inquired.

"What for?" cried the Honourable Adam.

"For the amount you've spent," said the Honourable Hilary, sententiously.

The Honourable Adam began to breathe with apparent difficulty, and his face grew purple. But Mr. Vane did not appear to notice these alarming symptoms. Then the candidate turned about, as on a pivot, seized Mr. Vane by the knee, and looked into his face.

"Did you come up here with orders for me to get out?" he demanded, with some pardonable violence. "By thunder, I didn't think that of my old friend, Hilary Vane. You ought to have known me better, and Flint ought to have known me better. There ain't a mite of use of our staying here another second, and you can go right back and tell Flint what I said. Flint knows I've been waiting to be governor for eight years, and each year it's been just a year ahead. You ask him what he said to me when he sent for me to go to New York. I thought he was a man of his word, and he promised me that I should be governor this year."

The Honourable Hilary gave no indication of being moved by this righteous outburst.

"You can be governor next year, when this reform nonsense has blown over," he said. "You can't be this year, even if you stay in the race."

"Why not?" the Honourable Adam asked pugnaciously.

"Your record won't stand it—not just now," said Mr. Vane, slowly.

"My record is just as good as yours, or any man's," said the Honourable Adam.

"I never run for office," answered Mr. Vane.

"Haven't I spent the days of my active life in the service of that road—and is this my reward? Haven't I done what Flint wanted always?"

"That's just the trouble," said the Honourable Hilary; "too many folks know it. If we're going to win this time, we've got to have a man who's never had any North-eastern connections."

"Who have you picked?" demanded the Honourable Adam, with alarming calmness.

"We haven't picked anybody yet," said Mr. Vane, "but the man who goes in will give you a cheque for what you've spent, and you can be governor next time."

"Well, if this isn't the d—dest, coldest-blooded proposition ever made, I want to know!" cried the Honourable Adam. "Will Flint put up a bond of one hundred thousand dollars that I'll be nominated and elected next year? This is the clearest case of going back on an old friend I ever saw. If this is the way you fellows get scared because a sham reformer gets up and hollers against the road, then I want to serve notice on you that I'm not made of that kind of stuff. When I go into a fight, I go

in to stay, and you can't pull me out by the coat-tails in favour of a saint who's never done a lick of work for the road. You tell Flint that."

"All right, Adam," said Hilary.

Some note in Hilary's voice, as he made this brief answer, suddenly sobered the Honourable Adam, and sent a cold chill down his spine. He had had many dealings with Mr. Vane, and he had always been as putty in the chief counsel's hands. This simple acquiescence did more to convince the Honourable Adam that his chances of nomination were in real danger than a long and forceful summary of the situation could have accomplished. But like many weak men, the Honourable Adam had a stubborn streak, and a fatuous idea that opposition and indignation were signs of strength.

"I've made sacrifices for the road before, and effaced myself. But by thunder, this is too much!"

Corporations, like republics, are proverbially ungrateful. The Honourable Hilary might have voiced this sentiment, but refrained.

"Mr. Flint's a good friend of yours, Adam. He wanted me to say that he'd always taken care of you, and always would, so far as in his power. If you can't be landed this time, it's commonsense for you to get out, and wait— isn't it? We'll see that you get a cheque to cover what you've put out."

The humour in this financial sacrifice of Mr. Flint's (which the unknown new candidate was to make with a cheque) struck neither the Honourable Adam nor the Honourable Hilary. The transaction, if effected, would resemble that of the shrine to the Virgin built by a grateful Marquis of Mantua—which a Jew paid for.

The Honourable Adam got to his feet.

"You can tell Flint," he said, "that if he will sign a bond of one hundred thousand dollars to elect me next time, I'll get out. That's my last word."

"All right, Adam," replied Mr. Vane, rising also.

Mr. Hunt stared at the Honourable Hilary thoughtfully; and although the gubernatorial candidate was not an observant man, he was suddenly struck by the fact that the chief counsel was growing old.

"I won't hold this against you, Hilary," he said.

"Politics," said the Honourable Hilary, "are business matters."

"I'll show Flint that it would have been good business to stick to me," said the Honourable Adam. "When he gets panicky, and spends all his money on new equipment and service, it's time for me to drop him. You can tell him so from me."

"Hadn't you better write him?" said the Honourable Hilary.

The rumour of the entry of Mr. Giles Henderson of Kingston into the gubernatorial contest preceded, by ten days or so, the actual event. It is difficult for the historian to unravel the precise circumstances which led to this candidacy. Conservative citizens throughout the State, it was understood, had become greatly concerned over the trend political affairs were taking; the radical doctrines of one candidate—propounded for very obvious reasons—they turned from in disgust; on the other hand, it was evident that an underlying feeling existed in certain sections that any candidate who was said to have had more or less connection with the Northeastern Railroads was undesirable at the present time. This was not to be taken as a reflection on the Northeastern, which had been

the chief source of the State's prosperity, but merely as an acknowledgment that a public opinion undoubtedly existed, and ought to be taken into consideration by the men who controlled the Republican party.

This was the gist of leading articles which appeared simultaneously in several newspapers, apparently before the happy thought of bringing forward Mr. Giles Henderson had occurred to anybody. He was mentioned first, and most properly, by the editor of the *Kingston Pilot*; and the article, with comments upon it, ran like wildfire through the press of the State,—appearing even in those sheets which maintained editorially that they were for the Honourable Adam B. Hunt first and last and all the time. Whereupon Mr. Giles Henderson began to receive visits from the solid men—not politicians—of the various cities and counties. For instance, Mr. Silas Tredway of Ripton made such a pilgrimage and, as a citizen who had voted in 1860 for Abraham Lincoln (showing Mr. Tredway himself to have been a radical once), appealed to Mr. Henderson to save the State.

At first Mr. Henderson would give no ear to these appeals, but shook his head pessimistically. He was not a politician—so much the better, we don't want a politician; he was a plain business man—exactly what is needed; a conservative, level-headed business man wholly lacking in those sensational qualities which are a stench in the nostrils of good citizens. Mr. Giles Henderson admitted that the time had come when a man of these qualities was needed—but he was not the man. Mr. Tredway was the man—so he told Mr. Tredway; Mr. Gates of Brampton was the man—so he assured Mr. Gates. Mr. Henderson had no desire to meddle in politics; his life was a happy and a full one. But was it not Mr. Henderson's duty? Cin-

cinnatus left the plough, and Mr. Henderson should leave the ledger at the call of his countrymen.

Mr. Giles Henderson was mild-mannered and blue-eyed, with a scanty beard that was turning white; he was a deacon of the church, a member of the school board, president of the Kingston National Bank; the main business of his life had been in coal (which incidentally had had to be transported over the Northeastern Railroads); and coal rates, for some reason, were cheaper from Kingston than from many points out of the State the distances of which were nearer. Mr. Henderson had been able to sell his coal at a lower price than any other large dealer in the eastern part of the State. Mr. Henderson was the holder of a large amount of stock in the Northeastern, inherited from his father. Facts of no special significance, and not printed in the weekly newspapers. Mr. Henderson lived in a gloomy Gothic house on High Street, ate three very plain meals a day, and drank iced water. He had been a good husband and a good father, and had always voted the Republican ticket. He believed in the gold standard, a high tariff, and eternal damnation. At last his resistance was overcome, and he consented to allow his name to be used.

It was used, with a vengeance. Spontaneous praise of Mr. Giles Henderson bubbled up all over the State, and editors who were for the Honourable Adam B. Hunt suddenly developed a second choice. No man within the borders of the commonwealth had so many good qualities as the new candidate, and it must have been slightly annoying to one of that gentleman's shrinking nature to read daily, on coming down to breakfast, a list of virtues attributed to him as long as a rate schedule. How he

must have longed for the record of one wicked deed to make him human!

Who will pick a flaw in the character of the Honourable Giles Henderson? Let that man now stand forth.

The news of the probable advent of Mr. Giles Henderson on the field, as well as the tidings of his actual consent to be a candidate, were not slow in reaching Leith. And—Mr. Crewe's Bureau of Information being in perfect working order—the dastardly attempt on the Honourable Adam B. Hunt's coat-tails was known there. More wonders to relate: the Honourable Adam B. Hunt had become a reformer; he had made a statement at last, in which he declared with vigour that no machine or ring was behind him; he stood on his own merits, invited the minutest inspection of his record, declared that he was an advocate of good government, and if elected would be the servant of no man and of no corporation.

Thrice-blessed State, in which there were now three reform candidates for governor!

All of these happenings went to indicate confusion in the enemy's camp, and corresponding elation in Mr. Crewe's. Woe to the reputation for political sagacity of the gentleman who had used the words "negligible" and "monumental farce!" The tide was turning, and the candidate from Leith redoubled his efforts. Had he been confounded by the advent of the Honourable Giles? Not at all. Mr. Crewe was not given to satire; his methods, as we know, were direct. Hence the real author of the following passage in his speech before an overflow meeting in the State capital remains unknown:

"My friends," Mr. Crewe had said, "I have been waiting for the time when St. Giles of the Blameless Life would be pushed forward, apparently as the only hope of

our so-called 'solid citizens.' (*Prolonged laughter, and audible repetitions of Mr. Henderson's nickname, which was to stick.*) I will tell you by whose desire St. Giles became a candidate, and whose bidding he will do if he becomes governor as blindly and obediently as the Honourable Adam B. Hunt ever did. (*Shouts of "Flint!" and "The Northeastern!"*) I see you know. Who sent the solid citizens to see Mr. Henderson? (*"Flint!"*) This is a clever trick—exactly what I should have done if I'd been running their campaign—only they didn't do it early enough. They picked Mr. Giles Henderson for two reasons: because he lives in Kingston, which is anti-railroad and supported the Gaylord bill, and because he never in his life committed any positive action, good or bad—and he never will. And they made another mistake—the Honourable Adam B. Hunt wouldn't back out." (*Laughter and cheers.*)

CHAPTER VII.

IN WHICH EUPHRASIA TAKES A HAND.

AUSTEN had not forgotten his promise to Euphrasia, and he had gone to Hanover Street many times since his sojourn at Mr. Jabe Jenney's. Usually these visits had taken place in the middle of the day, when Euphrasia, with gentle but determined insistence, had made him sit down before some morsel which she had prepared against his coming, and which he had not the heart to refuse. In answer to his inquiries about Hilary, she would toss her head and reply, disdainfully, that he was as comfortable as he should be. For Euphrasia had her own

strict ideas of justice, and to her mind Hilary's suffering was deserved. That suffering was all the more terrible because it was silent, but Euphrasia was a stern woman. To know that he missed Austen, to feel that Hilary was being justly punished for his treatment of her idol, for his callous neglect and lack of realisation of the blessings of his life—these were Euphrasia's grim compensations.

At times, even, she had experienced a strange rejoicing that she had promised Austen to remain with his father, for thus it had been given her to be the daily witness of a retribution for which she had longed during many years. Nor did she strive to hide her feelings. Their intercourse, never voluminous, had shrunk to the barest necessities for the use of speech; but Hilary, ever since the night of his son's departure, had read in the face of his housekeeper a knowledge of his suffering, an exultation a thousand times more maddening than the little reproaches of language would have been. He avoided her more than ever, and must many times have regretted bitterly the fact that he had betrayed himself to her. As for Euphrasia, she had no notion of disclosing Hilary's torture to his son. She was determined that the victory, when it came, should be Austen's, and the surrender Hilary's.

"He manages to eat his meals, and gets along as common," she would reply. "He only thinks of himself and that railroad."

But Austen read between the lines.

"Poor old Judge," he would answer; "it's because he's made that way, Phrasie. He can't help it, any more than I can help flinging law-books on the floor and running off to the country to have a good time. You know as well as I do that he hasn't had much joy out of life; that he'd like to be different, only he doesn't know how."

"I can't see that it takes much knowledge to treat a wife and son like human beings," Euphrasia retorted; "that's only common humanity. For a man that goes to meetin' twice a week, you'd have thought he'd have learned something by this time out of the New Testament. He's prayed enough in his life, goodness knows!"

Now Euphrasia's ordinarily sharp eyes were sharpened an hundred fold by affection; and of late, at odd moments during his visits, Austen had surprised them fixed on him with a penetration that troubled him.

"You don't seem to fancy the tarts as much as you used to," she would remark. "Time was when you'd eat three and four at a sittin'."

"Phrasie, one of your persistent fallacies is, that I'm still a boy."

"You ain't yourself," said Euphrasia, ignoring this pleasantry, "and you ain't been yourself for some months. I've seen it. I haven't brought you up for nothing. If *he's* troubling you, don't you worry a mite. He ain't worth it. He eats better than you do."

"I'm not worrying much about that," Austen answered, smiling. "The Judge and I will patch it up before long—I'm sure. He's worried now over these people who are making trouble for his railroad."

"I wish railroads had never been invented," cried Euphrasia. "It seems to me they bring nothing but trouble. My mother used to get along pretty well in a stage-coach."

One evening in September, when the summer days were rapidly growing shorter and the mists rose earlier in the valley of the Blue, Austen, who had stayed late at the office preparing a case, ate his supper at the Ripton House. As he sat in the big dining-room, which was

almost empty, the sense of loneliness which he had experienced so often of late came over him, and he thought of Euphrasia. His father, he knew, had gone to Kingston for the night, and so he drove up Hanover Street and hitched Pepper to the stone post before the door. Euphrasia, according to an invariable custom, would be knitting in the kitchen at this hour; and at the sight of him in the window, she dropped her work with a little, joyful cry.

"I was just thinking of you!" she said, in a low voice of tenderness which many people would not have recognised as Euphrasia's; as though her thoughts of him were the errant ones of odd moments! "I'm so glad you come. It's lonesome here of evenings, Austen."

He entered silently and sat down beside her, in a Windsor chair which had belonged to some remote Austen of bygone days.

"You don't have as good things to eat up at Miss Jenney's as I give you," she remarked. "Not that you appear to care much for eatables any more. Austen, are you feeling poorly?"

"I can dig more potatoes in a day than any other man in Ripton," he declared.

"You'd ought to get married," said Euphrasia, abruptly. "I've told you that before, but you never seem to pay any attention to what I say."

"Why haven't you tried it, Phrasie?" he retorted.

He was not prepared for what followed. Euphrasia did not answer at once, but presently her knitting dropped to her lap, and she sat staring at the old clock on the kitchen shelf.

"He never asked me," she said, simply.

Austen was silent. The answer seemed to recall, with

infinite pathos, Euphrasia's long-lost youth, and he had not thought of youth as a quality which could ever have pertained to her. She must have been young once, and fresh, and full of hope for herself; she must have known, long ago, something of what he now felt, something of the joy and pain, something of the inexpressible, never ceasing yearning for the fulfilment of a desire that dwarfed all others. Euphrasia had been denied that fulfilment. And he—would he, too, be denied it?

Out of Euphrasia's eyes, as she gazed at the mantel-shelf, shone the light of undying fires within—fires which at a touch could blaze forth after endless years, transforming the wrinkled face, softening the sterner lines of character. And suddenly there was a new bond between the two. So used are the young to the acceptance of the sacrifice of the old that they lose sight of that sacrifice. But Austen saw now, in a flash, the years of Euphrasia's self-denial, the years of memories, the years of regrets for that which might have been.

"Phrasie," he said, laying a hand on hers, which rested on the arm of the chair, "I was only joking, you know."

"I know, I know," Euphrasia answered hastily, and turned and looked into his face searchingly. Her eyes were undimmed, and the light was still in them which revealed a soul of which he had had no previous knowledge.

"I know you was, dear. I never told that to a living being except your mother. He's dead now—he never knew. But I told her—I couldn't help it. She had a way of drawing things out of you, and you just couldn't resist. I'll never forget that day she came in here and looked at me and took my hand—same as you have it

now. She wasn't married then. I'll never forget the sound of her voice as she said, 'Euphrasia, tell me about it.'" (Here Euphrasia's own voice trembled.) "I told her, just as I'm telling you,—because I couldn't help it. Folks had to tell her things."

She turned her hand and clasped his tightly with her own thin fingers.

"And oh, Austen," she cried, "I want so that you should be happy! *She* was so unhappy, it doesn't seem right that you should be, too."

"I shall be, Phrasie," he said; "you mustn't worry about that."

For awhile the only sound in the room was the ticking of the old clock with the quaint, coloured picture on its panel. And then, with a movement which, strangely, was an acute reminder of a way Victoria had, Euphrasia turned and searched his face once more.

"You're not happy," she said.

He could not put this aside—nor did he wish to. Her own confidence had been so simple, so fine, so sure of his sympathy, that he felt it would be unworthy to equivocate; the confessions of the self-reliant are sacred things. Yes, and there had been times when he had longed to unburden himself; but he had had no intimate on this plane, and—despite the great sympathy between them—that Euphrasia might understand had never occurred to him. She had read his secret.

In that instant Euphrasia, with the instinct which love lends to her sex, had gone farther; indignation seized her—and the blame fell upon the woman. Austen's words, unconsciously, were an answer to her thoughts.

"It isn't anybody's fault but my own," he said.

Euphrasia's lips were tightly closed. Long ago the

idol of her youth had faded into the substance of which dreams are made—to be recalled by dreams alone; another worship had filled her heart, and Austen Vane had become—for her—the fulness and the very meaning of life itself; one to be admired of all men, to be desired of all women. Visions of Austen's courtship had at times risen in her mind, although Euphrasia would not have called it a courtship. When the time came, Austen would confer; and so sure of his judgment was Euphrasia that she was prepared to take the recipient of the priceless gift into her arms. And now! Was it possible that a woman lived who would even hesitate? Curiosity seized Euphrasia with the intensity of a passion. Who was this woman? When and where had he seen her? Ripton could not have produced her—for it was characteristic of Euphrasia that no girl of her acquaintance was worthy to be raised to such a height; Austen's wife would be an unknown of ideal appearance and attainments. Hence indignation rocked Euphrasia, and doubts swayed her. In this alone she had been an idealist, but she might have known that good men were a prey to the unworthy of the opposite sex.

She glanced at Austen's face, and he smiled at her gently, as though he divined something of her thoughts.

"If it isn't your fault that you're not happy, then the matter's easily mended," she said.

He shook his head at her, as though in reproof.

"Was yours—easily mended?" he asked.

Euphrasia was silent a moment.

"He never knew," she repeated, in a low voice.

"Well, Phrasie, it looks very much as if we were in the same boat," he said.

Euphrasia's heart gave a bound.

"Then you haven't spoke!" she cried; "I knew you hadn't. I—I was a woman—but sometimes I've thought I'd ought to have given him some sign. You're a man, Austen; thank God for it, you're a man. If a man loves a woman, he's only got to tell her so."

"It isn't as simple as that," he answered.

Euphrasia gave him a startled glance.

"She ain't married?" she exclaimed.

"No," he said, and laughed in spite of himself.

Euphrasia breathed again. For Sarah Austen had had a morality of her own, and on occasions had given expression to extreme views.

"She's not playin' with you?" was Euphrasia's next question, and her tone boded ill to any young person who would indulge in these tactics with Austen.

He shook his head again, and smiled at her vehemence.

"No, she's not playing with me—she isn't that kind. I'd like to tell you, but I can't—I can't. It was only because you guessed that I said anything about it." He disengaged his hand, and rose, and patted her on the cheek. "I suppose I had to tell somebody," he said, "and you seemed, somehow, to be the right person, Phrasie."

Euphrasia rose abruptly and looked up intently into his face. He thought it strange afterwards, as he drove along the dark roads, that she had not answered him.

Even though the matter were on the knees of the gods, Euphrasia would have taken it thence, if she could. Nor did Austen know that she shared with him, that night, his waking hours.

The next morning Mr. Thomas Gaylord, the younger, was making his way towards the office of the Gaylord Lumber Company, conveniently situated on Willow Street,

near the railroad. Young Tom was in a particularly jovial frame of mind, despite the fact that he had arrived in Ripton, on the night express, as early as five o'clock in the morning. He had been touring the State ostensibly on lumber business, but young Tom had a large and varied personal as well as commercial acquaintance, and he had the inestimable happiness of being regarded as an honest man, while his rough and genial qualities made him beloved. For these reasons and others of a more material nature, suggestions from Mr. Thomas Gaylord were apt to be well received—and Tom had been making suggestions.

Early as he was at his office—the office-boy was sprinkling the floor—young Tom had a visitor who was earlier still. Pausing in the doorway, Mr. Gaylord beheld with astonishment a prim, elderly lady in a stiff, black dress sitting upright on the edge of a capacious oak chair which seemed itself rather discomfited by what it contained,—for its hospitality had hitherto been extended to visitors of a very different sort.

"Well, upon my soul," cried young Tom, "if it isn't Euphrasia!"

"Yes, it's me," said Euphrasia; "I've be'n to market, and I had a notion to see you before I went home."

Mr. Gaylord took the office-boy lightly by the collar of his coat and lifted him, sprinkling can and all, out of the doorway and closed the door. Then he drew his revolving chair close to Euphrasia, and sat down. They were old friends, and more than once in a youth far from model Tom had experienced certain physical reproof at her hands, for which he bore no ill-will. There was anxiety on his face as he asked:—

"There hasn't been any accident, has there, Euphrasia?"

"No," she said.

"No new row?" inquired Tom.

"No," said Euphrasia. She was a direct person, as we know, but true descendants of the Puritans believe in the decency of preliminaries, and here was certainly an affair not to be plunged into. Euphrasia was a spinster in the strictest sense of that formidable and highly descriptive term, and she intended ultimately to discuss with Tom a subject of which she was supposed by tradition to be wholly ignorant, the mere mention of which still brought warmth to her cheeks. Such a delicate matter should surely be led up to delicately. In the meanwhile Tom was mystified.

"Well, I'm mighty glad to see you, anyhow," he said heartily. "It was good of you to call, Euphrasia. I can't offer you a cigar."

"I should think not," said Euphrasia.

Tom reddened. He still retained for her some of his youthful awe.

"I can't do the honours of hospitality as I'd wish to," he went on; "I can't give you anything like the pies you used to give me."

"You stole most of 'em," said Euphrasia.

"I guess that's so," said young Tom, laughing, "but I'll never taste pies like 'em again as long as I live. Do you know, Euphrasia, there were two reasons why those were the best pies I ever ate?"

"What were they?" she asked, apparently unmoved.

"First," said Tom, "because you made 'em, and second, because they were stolen."

Truly, young Tom had a way with women, had he only been aware of it.

"I never took much stock in stolen things," said Euphrasia.

"Its because you never were tempted with such pie as that," replied the audacious Mr. Gaylord.

"You're gettin' almighty stout," said Euphrasia.

As we see her this morning, could she indeed ever have had a love affair?

"I don't have to use my legs as much as I once did," said Tom. And this remark brought to an end the first phase of this conversation,—brought to an end, apparently, all conversation whatsoever. Tom racked his brain for a new topic, opened his roll-top desk, drummed on it, looked up at the ceiling and whistled softly, and then turned and faced again the imperturbable Euphrasia.

"Euphrasia," he said, "you're not exactly a politician, I believe."

"Well," said Euphrasia, "I've be'n maligned a good many times, but nobody ever went that far."

Mr. Gaylord shook with laughter.

"Then I guess there's no harm in confiding political secrets to you," he said. "I've been around the State some this week, talking to people I know, and I believe if your Austen wasn't so obstinate, we could make him governor."

"Obstinate?" ejaculated Euphrasia.

"Yes," said Tom, with a twinkle in his eye, "obstinate. He doesn't seem to want something that most men would give their souls for."

"And why should he dirty himself with politics?" she demanded. "In the years I've lived with Hilary Vane I've seen enough of politicians, goodness knows. I never want to see another."

"If Austen was governor, we'd change some of that.

But mind, Euphrasia, this is a secret," said Tom, raising a warning finger. "If Austen hears about it now, the jig's up."

Euphrasia considered and thawed a little.

"They don't often have governors that young, do they?" she asked.

"No," said Tom, forcibly, "they don't. And so far as I know, they haven't had such a governor for years as Austen would make. But he won't push himself. You know, Euphrasia, I have always believed that he will be President some day."

Euphrasia received this somewhat startling prediction complacently. She had no doubt of its accuracy, but the enunciation of it raised young Tom in her estimation, and incidentally brought her nearer her topic.

"Austen ain't himself lately," she remarked.

"I knew that he didn't get along with Hilary," said Tom, sympathetically, beginning to realise now that Euphrasia had come to talk about her idol.

"It's Hilary doesn't get along with him," she retorted indignantly. "He's responsible—not Austen. Of all the narrow, pig-headed, selfish men the Lord ever created, Hilary Vane's the worst. It's Hilary drove him out of his mother's house to live with strangers. It's Austen that comes around to inquire for his father—Hilary never has a word to say about Austen." A trace of colour actually rose under Euphrasia's fallow skin, and she cast her eyes downward. "You've known him a good while, haven't you, Tom?"

"All my life," said Tom, mystified again, "all my life. And I think more of him than of anybody else in the world."

"I calculated as much," she said; "that's why I came."

She hesitated. Artful Euphrasia! We will let the ingenuous Mr. Gaylord be the first to mention this delicate matter, if possible. "Goodness knows, it ain't Hilary I came to talk about. I had a notion that you'd know if—anything else was troubling Austen."

"Why," said Tom, "there can't be any business troubles outside of those Hilary's mixed up in. Austen doesn't spend any money to speak of, except what he gives away, and he's practically chief counsel for our company."

Euphrasia was silent a moment.

"I suppose there's nothing else that could bother him," she remarked. She had never held Tom Gaylord's powers of comprehension in high estimation, and the estimate had not risen during this visit. But she had undervalued him; even Tom could rise to an inspiration—when the sources of all other inspirations were eliminated.

"Why," he exclaimed, with a masculine lack of delicacy, "he may be in love!"

"That's struck you, has it?" said Euphrasia.

But Tom appeared to be thinking; he was, in truth, engaged in collecting his cumulative evidence: Austen's sleigh-ride at the capital, which he had discovered; his talk with Victoria after her fall, when she had betrayed an interest in Austen which Tom had thought entirely natural; and finally Victoria's appearance at Mr. Crewe's rally in Ripton. Young Mr. Gaylord had not had a great deal of experience in affairs of the heart, and he was himself aware that his diagnosis in such a matter would not carry much weight. He had conceived a tremendous admiration for Victoria, which had been shaken a little by the suspicion that she might be intending to marry Mr. Crewe. Tom Gaylord saw no reason why Austen Vane should not marry Mr. Flint's daughter if he chose—or any other

man's daughter; partaking, in this respect, somewhat of Euphrasia's view. As for Austen himself, Tom had seen no symptoms; but then, he reflected, he would not be likely to see any. However, he perceived the object now of Euphrasia's visit, and began to take the liveliest interest in it.

"So you think Austen's in love?" he demanded.

Euphrasia sat up straighter, if anything.

"I didn't say anything of the kind," she returned.

"He wouldn't tell me, you know," said Tom; "I can only guess at it."

"And the—lady?" said Euphrasia, craftily.

"I'm up a tree there, too. All I know is that he took her sleigh-riding one afternoon at the capital, and wouldn't tell me who he was going to take. And then she fell off her horse down at East Tunbridge Station—"

"Fell off her horse!" echoed Euphrasia, an accident comparable in her mind to falling off a roof. What manner of young woman was this who fell off horses?

"She wasn't hurt," Tom continued, "and she rode the beast home. He was a wild one, I can tell you, and she's got pluck. That's the first time I ever met her, although I had often seen her and thought she was a stunner to look at. She talked as if she took an interest in Austen."

An exact portrayal of Euphrasia's feelings at this description of the object of Austen's affections is almost impossible. A young woman who was a stunner, who rode wild horses and fell off them and rode them again, was beyond the pale not only of Euphrasia's experience but of her imagination likewise. And this hoyden had talked as though she took an interest in Austen! Euphrasia was speechless.

"The next time I saw her," said Tom, "was when she came down here to listen to Humphrey Crewe's attacks on the railroad. I thought that was a sort of a queer thing for Flint's daughter to do, but Austen didn't seem to look at it that way. He talked to her after the show was over."

At this point Euphrasia could contain herself no longer, and in her excitement she slipped off the edge of the chair and onto her feet.

"Flint's daughter?" she cried; "Augustus P. Flint's daughter?"

Tom looked at her in amazement.

"Didn't you know who it was?" he stammered. But Euphrasia was not listening.

"I've seen her," she was saying; "I've seen her ridin' through Ripton in that little red waggon, drivin' herself, with a coachman perched up beside her. Flint's daughter!" Euphrasia became speechless once more, the complications opened up being too vast for intelligent comment. Euphrasia, however, grasped some of the problems which Austen had had to face. Moreover, she had learned what she had come for, and the obvious thing to do now was to go home and reflect. So, without further ceremony, she walked to the door and opened it, and turned again with her hand on the knob. "Look here, Tom Gaylord," she said, "if you tell Austen I was here, I'll never forgive you. I don't believe you've got any more sense than to do it."

And with these words she took her departure, ere the amazed Mr. Gaylord had time to show her out. Half an hour elapsed before he opened his letters.

When she arrived home in Hanover Street it was nine o'clock—an hour well on in the day for Euphrasia. Un-

locking the kitchen door, she gave a glance at the stove to assure herself that it had not been misbehaving, and went into the passage on her way upstairs to take off her gown before sitting down to reflect upon the astonishing thing she had heard. Habit had so crystallised in Euphrasia that no news, however amazing, could have shaken it. But in the passage she paused; an unwonted, or rather untimely, sound reached her ears, a sound which came from the front of the house—and at nine o'clock in the morning! Had Austen been at home, Euphrasia would have thought nothing of it. In her remembrance Hilary Vane, whether he returned from a journey or not, had never been inside the house at that hour on a week-day; and, unlike the gentleman in "*La Vie de Bohème*," Euphrasia did not have to be reminded of the Sabbath.

Perhaps Austen had returned! Or perhaps it was a burglar! Euphrasia, undaunted, ran through the darkened front hall to where the graceful banister ended in a curve at the foot of the stairs, and there, on the bottom step, sat a man with his head in his hands. Euphrasia shrieked. He looked up, and she saw that it was Hilary Vane. She would have shrieked, anyway.

"What in the world's the matter with you?" she cried.

"I—I stumbled coming down the stairs," he said.

"But what are you doing at home in the middle of the morning?" she demanded.

He did not answer her. The subdued light which crept under the porch and came in through the fan-shaped window over the door fell on his face.

"Are you sick?" said Euphrasia. In all her life she had never seen him look like that.

He shook his head, but did not attempt to rise. A Hilary Vane without vigour!

"No," he said, "no. I just came up here from the train to—get somethin' I'd left in my room."

"A likely story!" said Euphrasia. "You've never done that in thirty years. You're sick, and I'm a-going for the doctor."

She put her hand to his forehead, but he thrust it away and got to his feet, although in the effort he compressed his lips and winced.

"You stay where you are," he said; "I tell you I'm not sick, and I'm going down to the square. Let the doctors alone—I haven't got any use for 'em."

He walked to the door, opened it, and went out and slammed it in her face. By the time she had got it open again—a crack—he had reached the sidewalk, and was apparently in full possession of his powers and faculties.

CHAPTER VIII.

A FALLING-OUT IN HIGH PLACES.

ALTHOUGH one of the most exciting political battles ever fought is fast coming to its climax, and a now jubilant Mr. Crewe is contesting every foot of ground in the State with the determination and pertinacity which make him a marked man; although the convention wherein his fate will be decided is now but a few days distant, and everything has been done to secure a victory which mortal man can do, let us follow Hilary Vane to Fairview. Not that Hilary has been idle. The "Book of Arguments" is exhausted, and the chiefs and the captains have been to Ripton, and received their final orders, but more than one has gone back to his fief with the vision

of a changed Hilary who has puzzled them. Rumours have been in the air that the harmony between the Source of Power and the Distribution of Power is not as complete as it once was. Certainly, Hilary Vane is not the man he was—although this must not even be whispered. Senator Whitredge had told—but never mind that. In the old days an order was an order; there were no rebels then. In the old days there was no wavering and rescinding, and if the chief counsel told you, with brevity, to do a thing, you went and did it straightway, with the knowledge that it was the best thing to do. Hilary Vane had aged suddenly, and it occurred for the first time to many that, in this utilitarian world, old blood must be superseded by young blood.

Two days before the convention, immediately after taking dinner at the Ripton House with Mr. Nat Billings, Hilary Vane, in response to a summons, drove up to Fairview. One driving behind him would have observed that the Honourable Hilary's horse took his own gaits, and that the reins, most of the time, drooped listlessly on his quarters. A September stillness was in the air, a September purple clothed the distant hills, but to Hilary the glories of the day were as things non-existent. Even the groom at Fairview, who took his horse, glanced back at him with a peculiar expression as he stood for a moment on the steps with a hesitancy the man had never before remarked.

In the meantime Mr. Flint, with a pile of letters in a special basket on the edge of his desk, was awaiting his counsel; the president of the Northeastern was pacing his room, as was his wont when his activities were for a moment curbed, or when he had something on his mind; and every few moments he would glance towards his

mantel at the clock which was set to railroad time. In past days he had never known Hilary Vane to be a moment late to an appointment. The door was open, and five-and-twenty minutes had passed the hour before he saw the lawyer in the doorway. Mr. Flint was a man of such preoccupation of mind that he was not likely to be struck by any change there might have been in his counsel's appearance.

"It's half-past three," he said.

Hilary entered, and sat down beside the window.

"You mean that I'm late," he replied.

"I've got some engineers coming here in less than an hour," said Mr. Flint.

"I'll be gone in less than an hour," said Hilary.

"Well," said Mr. Flint, "let's get down to hardtack. I've got to be frank with you, Vane, and tell you plainly that this political business is all at sixes and sevens."

"It isn't necessary to tell me that," said Hilary.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that I know it."

"To put it mildly," the president of the Northeastern continued, "it's the worst mixed-up campaign I ever knew. Here we are with the convention only two days off, and we don't know where we stand, how many delegates we've got, or whether this upstart at Leith is going to be nominated over our heads. Here's Adam Hunt with his back up, declaring he's a reformer, and all his section of the State behind him. Now if that could have been handled otherwise—"

"Who told Hunt to go in?" Hilary inquired.

"Things were different then," said Mr. Flint, vigorously. "Hunt had been promised the governorship for a long time, and when Ridout became out of the question—"

"Why did Ridout become out of the question?" asked Hilary.

Mr. Flint made a gesture of impatience.

"On account of that foolishness in the Legislature, of course."

"That foolishness in the Legislature,' as you call it, represented a sentiment all over the State," said Hilary. "And if I'd be'n you, I wouldn't have let Hunt in this year. But you didn't ask my opinion. You asked me when you begged me to get Adam out, and I predicted that he wouldn't get out."

Mr. Flint took a turn up and down the room.

"I'm sorry I didn't send for him to go to New York," he said. "Well, anyway, the campaign's been muddled, that's certain,—whoever muddled it." And the president looked at his counsel as though he, at least, had no doubts on this point. But Hilary appeared unaware of the implication, and made no reply.

"I can't find out what Bascom and Botcher are doing," Mr. Flint went on; "I don't get any reports—they haven't been here. Perhaps you know. They've had trip passes enough to move the whole population of Putnam County. Fairplay says they're gettin' delegates for Adam Hunt instead of Giles Henderson. And Whitredge says that Jake Botcher is talking reform."

"I guess Botcher and Bascom know their business," said Mr. Vane. If Mr. Flint had been a less concentrated man, he might have observed that the Honourable Hilary had not cut a piece of Honey Dew this afternoon.

"What is their business?" asked Mr. Flint—a little irrelevantly for him.

"What you and I taught 'em," said Mr. Vane.

Mr. Flint considered this a moment, and decided to let it pass. He looked at the Honourable Hilary more closely, however.

"What's the matter with you, Vane? You're not sick, are you?"

"No."

Mr. Flint took another turn.

"Now the question is, what are we going to do? If you've got any plan, I want to hear it."

Mr. Vane was silent.

"Suppose Crewe goes into the convention with enough delegates to lock it up, so that none of the three has a majority?"

"I guess he'll do that," said Mr. Vane. He fumbled in his pocket, and drew out a typewritten list. It must be explained that the caucuses, or primaries, had been held in the various towns of the State at odd dates, and that the delegates pledged for the different candidates had been published in the newspapers from time to time—although very much in accordance with the desires of their individual newspapers. Mr. Crewe's delegates necessarily had been announced by what is known as political advertising. Mr. Flint took the Honourable Hilary's list, ran his eye over it, and whistled.

"You mean he *claims* three hundred and fifty out of the thousand."

"No," said Hilary, "he claims six hundred. He'll have three hundred and fifty."

In spite of the "Book of Arguments," Mr. Crewe was to have three hundred! It was incredible, preposterous. Mr. Flint looked at his counsel once more, and wondered whether he could be mentally failing.

"Fairplay only gives him two hundred."

"Fairplay only gave him ten, in the beginning," said Hilary.

"You come here two days before the convention and tell me Crewe has three hundred and fifty!" Mr. Flint exclaimed, as though Hilary Vane were personally responsible for Mr. Crewe's delegates. A very different tone from that of other times, when conventions were mere ratifications of Imperial decrees. "Do you realise what it means if we lose control? Thousands and thousands of dollars in improvements—rolling stock, better service, new bridges, and eliminations of grade crossings. And they'll raise our tax rate to the average, which means thousands more. A new railroad commission that we can't talk to, and lower dividends—lower dividends, do you understand? That means trouble with the directors, the stockholders, and calls for explanations. And what explanations can I make which can be printed in a public report?"

"You were always pretty good at 'em, Flint," said Hilary.

This remark, as was perhaps natural, did not improve the temper of the president of the Northeastern.

"If you think I like this political business any better than you do, you're mightily mistaken," he replied. "And now I want to hear what plan you've got for the convention. Suppose there's a deadlock, as you say there will be, how are you going to handle it? Can you get a deal through between Giles Henderson and Adam Hunt? With all my other work, I've had to go into this myself. Hunt hasn't got a chance. Bascom and Botcher are egging him on and making him believe he has. When Hunt gets into the convention and begins to fall off, you've got to talk to him, Vane. And his delegates have

all got to be seen at the Pelican the night before and understand that they're to swing to Henderson after two ballots. You've *got* to keep your hand on the throttle in the convention, you understand. And I don't need to impress upon you how grave are the consequences if this man Crewe gets in, with public sentiment behind him and a reactionary Lower House. You've *got* to keep your hand on the throttle."

"That's part of my business, isn't it?" Hilary asked, without turning his head.

Mr. Flint did not answer, but his eye rested again on his counsel's face.

"I'm that kind of a lawyer," Hilary continued, apparently more to himself than to his companion. "You pay me for that sort of thing more than for the work I do in the courts. Isn't that so, Flint?"

Mr. Flint was baffled. Two qualities which were very dear to him he designated as *sane* and *safe*, and he had hitherto regarded his counsel as the sanest and safest of men. This remark made him wonder seriously whether the lawyer's mind were not giving away; and if so, to whom was he to turn at this eleventh hour? No man in the State knew the ins and outs of conventions as did Hilary Vane; and, in the rare times when there had been crises, he had sat quietly in the little room off the platform as at the keyboard of an organ, and the delegates had responded to his touch. Hilary Vane had named the presidents of conventions, and the committees, and by pulling out stops could get such resolutions as he wished—or as Mr. Flint wished. But now?

Suddenly a suspicion invaded Mr. Flint's train of thought; he repeated Hilary's words over to himself.

"I'm that kind of a lawyer," and another individuality arose before the president of the Northeastern. Instincts are curious things. On the day, some years before, when Austen Vane had brought his pass into this very room and laid it down on his desk, Mr. Flint had recognised a man with whom he would have to deal,—a stronger man than Hilary. Since then he had seen Austen's hand in various disturbing matters, and now it was as if he heard Austen speaking. "*I'm that kind of a lawyer.*" Not Hilary Vane, but Hilary Vane's son was responsible for Hilary Vane's condition—this recognition came to Mr. Flint in a flash. Austen had somehow accomplished the incredible feat of making Hilary Vane ashamed—and when such men as Hilary are ashamed, their usefulness is over. Mr. Flint had seen the thing happen with a certain kind of financiers, one day aggressive, combative, and the next broken, querulous men. Let a man cease to believe in what he is doing, and he loses force.

The president of the Northeastern used a locomotive as long as possible, but when it ceased to be able to haul a train up-grade, he sent it to the scrap-heap. Mr. Flint was far from being a bad man, but he worshipped power, and his motto was the survival of the fittest. He did not yet feel pity for Hilary—for he was angry. Only contempt,—contempt that one who had been a power should come to this. To draw a somewhat far-fetched parallel, a Captain Kidd or a Cæsar Borgia with a conscience would never have been heard of. Mr. Flint did not call it a conscience—he had a harder name for it. He had to send Hilary, thus vitiated, into the Convention to conduct the most important battle since the founding of the Empire, and Austen Vane was responsible.

Mr. Flint had to control himself. In spite of his feel-

ings, he saw that he must do so. And yet he could not resist saying:—

"I get a good many rumours here. They tell me that there may be another candidate in the field—a dark horse."

"Who?" asked Hilary.

"There was a meeting in the room of a man named Redbrook during the Legislature to push this candidate," said Mr. Flint, eyeing his counsel significantly, "and now young Gaylord has been going quietly around the State in his interest."

Suddenly the listless figure of Hilary Vane straightened, and the old look which had commanded the respect and obedience of men returned to his eye.

"You mean my son?" he demanded.

"Yes," said Mr. Flint; "they tell me that when the time comes, your son will be a candidate on a platform opposed to our interests."

"Then," said Hilary, "they tell you a damned lie."

Hilary Vane had not sworn for a quarter of a century, and yet it is to be doubted if he ever spoke more nobly. He put his hands on the arms of his chair and lifted himself to his feet, where he stood for a moment, a tall figure to be remembered. Mr. Flint remembered it for many years. Hilary Vane's long coat was open, and seemed in itself to express this strange and new-found vigour in its flowing lines; his head was thrown back, and a look on his face which Mr. Flint had never seen there. He drew from an inner pocket a long envelope, and his hand trembled, though with seeming eagerness, as he held it out to Mr. Flint.

"Here!" he said.

"What's this?" asked Mr. Flint. He evinced no desire to take it, but Hilary pressed it on him.

"My resignation as counsel for your road."

The president of the Northeastern, bewildered by this sudden transformation, stared at the envelope.

"What? Now—to-day?" he said.

"No," answered Hilary; "read it. You'll see it takes effect the day after the State convention. I'm not much use any more—you've done your best to bring that home to me, and you'll need a new man to do—the kind of work I've been doing for you for twenty-five years. But you can't get a new man in a day, and I said I'd stay with you, and I keep my word. I'll go to the convention; I'll do my best for you, as I always have. But I don't like it, and after that I'm through. After that I become a lawyer—a *lawyer*, do you understand?"

"A lawyer?" Mr. Flint repeated.

"Yes, a lawyer. Ever since last June, when I came up here, I've realised what I was. A Brush Bascom, with a better education and more brains, but a Brush Bascom—with the brains prostituted. While things were going along smoothly I didn't know—you never attempted to talk to me this way before. Do you remember how you took hold of me that day, and begged me to stay? I do, and I stayed. Why? Because I was a friend of yours. Association with you for twenty-five years had got under my skin, and I thought it had got under yours." Hilary let his hand fall. "To-day you've given me a notion of what friendship is. You've given me a chance to estimate myself on a new basis, and I'm much obliged to you for that. I haven't got many years left, but I'm glad to have found out what my life has been worth before I die."

He buttoned up his coat slowly, glaring at Mr. Flint

the while with a courage and a defiance that were superb. And he had picked up his hat before Mr. Flint found his tongue.

"You don't mean that, Vane," he cried. "My God, think what you've said!"

Hilary pointed at the desk with a shaking finger.

"If that were a scaffold, and a rope were around my neck, I'd say it over again. And I thank God I've had a chance to say it to you." He paused, cleared his throat, and continued in a voice that all at once had become unemotional and natural. "I've three tin boxes of the private papers you wanted. I didn't think of 'em to-day, but I'll bring 'em up to you myself on Thursday."

Mr. Flint reflected afterwards that what made him helpless must have been the sudden change in Hilary's manner to the commonplace. The president of the Northeastern stood where he was, holding the envelope in his hand, apparently without the power to move or speak. He watched the tall form of his chief counsel go through the doorway, and something told him that that exit was coincident with the end of an era.

The end of an era of fraud, of self-deception, of conditions that violated every sacred principle of free government which men had shed blood to obtain.

CHAPTER IX.

AN ADVENTURE OF VICTORIA'S.

MRS. POMFRET was a proud woman, for she had at last obtained the consent of the lion to attend a lunch party. She would have liked a dinner much better, but

beggars are not choosers, and she seized eagerly on the lunch. The two days before the convention Mr. Crewe was to spend at Leith; having continual conferences, of course, receiving delegations, and discussing with prominent citizens certain offices which would be in his gift when he became governor. Also, there was Mr. Watling's nominating speech to be gone over carefully, and Mr. Crewe's own speech of acceptance to be composed. He had it in his mind, and he had decided that it should have two qualities: it should be brief and forceful.

Gratitude, however, is one of the noblest qualities of man, and a statesman should not fail to reward his faithful workers and adherents. As one of the chiefest of these, Mrs. Pomfret was entitled to high consideration. Hence the candidate had consented to have a lunch given in his honour, naming the day and the hour; and Mrs. Pomfret, believing that a prospective governor should possess some of the perquisites of royalty, in a rash moment submitted for his approval a list of guests. This included two distinguished foreigners who were staying at the Leith Inn, an Englishman and an Austrian, and an elderly lady of very considerable social importance who was on a visit to Mrs. Pomfret.

Mr. Crewe had graciously sanctioned the list, but took the liberty of suggesting as an addition to it the name of Miss Victoria Flint, explaining over the telephone to Mrs. Pomfret that he had scarcely seen Victoria all summer, and that he wanted particularly to see her. Mrs. Pomfret declared that she had only left out Victoria because her presence might be awkward for both of them, but Mr. Crewe waved this aside as a trivial and feminine objection; so Victoria was invited, and another young man to balance the table.

Mrs. Pomfret, as may have been surmised, was a woman of taste, and her villa at Leith, though small, had added considerably to her reputation for this quality. Patterson Pomfret had been a gentleman with red cheeks and an income, who incidentally had been satisfied with both. He had never tried to add to the income, which was large enough to pay the dues of the clubs the lists of which he thought worthy to include his name; large enough to pay hotel bills in London and Paris and at the baths, and to fee the servants at country houses; large enough to clothe his wife and himself, and to teach Alice the three essentials of music, French, and deportment. If that man is notable who has mastered one thing well, Patterson Pomfret was a notable man: he had mastered the possibilities of his income, and never in any year had he gone beyond it by so much as a sole *à vin blanc* or a pair of red silk stockings. When he died, he left a worthy financial successor in his wife.

Mrs. Pomfret, knowing the income, after an exhaustive search decided upon Leith as the place to build her villa. It must be credited to her foresight that, when she built, she saw the future possibilities of the place. The proper people had started it. And it must be credited to her genius that she added to these possibilities of Leith by bringing to it such families as she thought worthy to live in the neighbourhood—families which incidentally increased the value of the land. Her villa had a decided French look, and was so amazingly trim and neat and generally shipshape as to be fit for only the daintiest and most discriminating feminine occupation. The house was small, and its metamorphosis from a plain wooden farmhouse had been an achievement that excited general admiration. Porches had been added, and a coat of spot-

less white relieved by an orange striping so original that many envied, but none dared to copy it. The striping went around the white chimneys, along the cornice, under the windows and on the railings of the porch: there were window boxes gay with geraniums and abundant awnings striped white and red, to match the flowers: a high, formal hemlock hedge hid the house from the road, through which entered a blue-stone drive that cut the close-cropped lawn and made a circle to the doorway. Under the great maples on the lawn were a tea-table, rugs, and wicker chairs, and the house itself was furnished by a variety of things of a design not to be bought in the United States of America: desks, photograph frames, writing-sets, clocks, paper-knives, flower baskets, magazine racks, cigarette boxes, and dozens of other articles for the duplicates of which one might have searched Fifth Avenue in vain.

Mr. Crewe was a little late. Important matters, he said, had detained him at the last moment, and he particularly enjoined Mrs. Pomfret's butler to listen carefully for the telephone, and twice during lunch it was announced that Mr. Crewe was wanted. At first he was preoccupied, and answered absently across the table the questions of the Englishman and the Austrian about American politics, and talked to the lady of social prominence on his right not at all; nor to Mrs. Pomfret—who excused him. Being a lady of discerning qualities, however, the hostess remarked that Mr. Crewe's eyes wandered more than once to the far end of the oval table, where Victoria sat, and even Mrs. Pomfret could not deny the attraction. Victoria wore a filmy gown of mauve that infinitely became her, and a shadowy hat which, in the semi-darkness of the dining-room, was a wondrous setting for her shapely head. Twice she caught Mr. Crewe's look

upon her and returned it amusedly from under her lashes,—and once he could have sworn that she winked perceptibly. What fires she kindled in his deep nature it is impossible to say.

She had kindled other fires at her side. The tall young Englishman had lost interest in American politics, had turned his back upon poor Alice Pomfret, and had forgotten the world in general. Not so the Austrian, who was on the other side of Alice, and who could not see Victoria. Mr. Crewe, by his manner and appearance, had impressed him as a person of importance, and he wanted to know more. Besides, he wished to improve his English, and Alice had been told to speak French to him. By a lucky chance, after several blind attempts, he awakened the interest of the personality.

"I hear you are what they call *reform* in America?"

This was not the question that opened the gates.

"I don't care much for the word," answered Mr. Crewe, shortly; "I prefer the word *progressive*."

Discourse on the word "progressive" by the Austrian—almost a monologue. But he was far from being discouraged.

"And Mrs. Pomfret tells me they play many detestable tricks on you—yes?"

"Tricks!" exclaimed Mr. Crewe, the memory of many recent ones being fresh in his mind; "I should say so. Do you know what a caucus is?"

"Caucus—caucus? It brings something to my head. Ah, I have seen a picture of it, in some English book. A very funny picture—it is in fun, yes?"

"A picture?" said Mr. Crewe. "Impossible!"

"But no," said the Austrian, earnestly, with one finger to his temples. "It is a funny picture, I know. I cannot

recall. But the word *caucus* I remember. That is a droll word."

"Perhaps, Baron," said Victoria, who had been resisting an almost uncontrollable desire to laugh, "you have been reading 'Alice in Wonderland.'"

The Englishman, Beatrice Chillingham, and some others (among whom were not Mr. Crewe and Mrs. Pomfret) gave way to an extremely pardonable mirth, in which the good-natured baron joined.

"Ach!" he cried. "It is so, I have seen it in 'Alice in Wonderland.'" Here the puzzled expression returned to his face, "But they are birds, are they not?"

Men whose minds are on serious things are impatient of levity, and Mr. Crewe looked at the baron out of cold, reproving eyes.

"No," he said, "they are not birds."

This reply was the signal for more laughter.

"A thousand pardons," exclaimed the baron. "It is I who am so ignorant. You will excuse me—yes?"

Mr. Crewe was mollified. The baron was a foreigner, he had been the object of laughter, and Mr. Crewe's chivalrous spirit resented it.

"What we call a caucus in the towns of this State," he said, "is a meeting of citizens of one party to determine who their candidates shall be. A caucus is a primary. There is a very loose primary law in this State, purposely kept loose by the politicians of the Northeastern Railroads, in order that they may play such tricks on decent men as they have been playing on me."

At this mention of the Northeastern Railroads the lady on Mr. Crewe's right, and some other guests, gave startled glances at Victoria. They observed with surprise that she seemed quite unmoved.

"I'll tell you one or two of the things those railroad lobbyists have done," said Mr. Crewe, his indignation rising with the subject, and still addressing the baron. "They are afraid to let the people into the caucuses, because they know *I'll* get the delegates. Nearly everywhere I speak to the people, I get the delegates. The railroad politicians send word to the town rings to hold 'snap caucuses' when they hear I'm coming into a town to speak, and the local politicians give out notices only a day before, and only to the voters they want in the caucus. In Hull the other day, out of a population of two thousand, twenty men elected four delegates for the railroad candidate."

"It is corruption!" cried the baron, who had no idea who Victoria was, and a very slim notion of what Mr. Crewe was talking about.

"Corruption!" said Mr. Crewe. "What can you expect when a railroad owns a State? The other day in Britain, where they elect fourteen delegates, the editor of a weekly newspaper printed false ballots with two of my men at the top and one at the bottom, and eleven railroad men in the middle. Fortunately some person with sense discovered the fraud before it was too late."

"You don't tell me!" said the baron.

"And every State and federal office-holder has been distributing passes for the last three weeks."

"Pass?" repeated the baron. "You mean they fight with the fist—so? To distribute a pass—so," and the baron struck out at an imaginary enemy. "It is the American language. I have read it in the prize-fight. I am told to read the prize-fight and the base-ball game."

Mr. Crewe thought it obviously useless to continue this conversation.

"The railroad," said the baron, "he is the modern Machiavelli."

"I say," Mr. Rangely, the Englishman, remarked to Victoria, "this is a bit rough on you, you know."

"Oh, I'm used to it," she laughed.

"Mr. Crewe," said Mrs. Pomfret, to the table at large, "deserves tremendous credit for the fight he has made, almost single-handed. Our greatest need in this country is what you have in England, Mr. Rangely,—gentlemen in politics. Our country gentlemen, like Mr. Crewe, are now going to assume their proper duties and responsibilities." She laid her napkin on the table and glanced at Alice as she continued: "Humphrey, I shall have to appoint you, as usual, the man of the house. Will you take the gentlemen into the library?"

Another privilege of celebrity is to throw away one's cigar, and walk out of the smoking room if one is bored. Mr. Crewe was, in a sense, the host. He indicated with a wave of his hand the cigars and cigarettes which Mrs. Pomfret had provided, and stood in a thoughtful manner before the empty fireplace, with his hands in his pockets, replying in brief sentences to the questions of Mr. Chillingham and the others. To tell the truth, Mr. Crewe was bringing to bear all of his extraordinary concentration of mind upon a problem with which he had been occupied for some years past. He was not a man, as we know, to take the important steps of life in a hurry, although, like the truly great, he was capable of making up his mind in a very brief period when it was necessary to strike. He had now, after weighing the question with the consideration which its gravity demanded, finally decided upon definite action. Whereupon he walked out of the library, leaving the other guests to comment as they would;

or not comment at all, for all he cared. Like all masterful men, he went direct to the thing he wanted.

The ladies were having coffee under the maples, by the tea-table. At some little distance from the group Beatrice Chillingham was walking with Victoria, and it was evident that Victoria found Miss Chillingham's remarks amusing. These were the only two in the party who did not observe Mr. Crewe's approach. Mrs. Pomfret, when she saw the direction which he was taking, lost the thread of her conversation, and the lady who was visiting her wore a significant expression.

"Victoria," said Mr. Crewe, "let's go around to the other side of the house and look at the view."

Victoria started and turned to him from Miss Chillingham, with the fun still sparkling in her eyes. It was, perhaps, as well for Mr. Crewe that he had not overheard their conversation; but this might have applied to any man.

"Are you sure you can spare the time?" she asked.

Mr. Crewe looked at his watch—probably from habit.

"I made it a point to leave the smoking-room early," he replied.

"We're flattered—aren't we, Beatrice?"

Miss Chillingham had a turned-up nose, and a face which was apt to be slightly freckled at this time of year; for she contemned vanity and veils. For fear of doing her an injustice, it must be added that she was not at all bad-looking; quite the contrary! All that can be noted in this brief space is that Beatrice Chillingham was—herself. Some people declared that she was possessed of the seven devils of her sex which Mr. Stockton wrote about.

"*I'm* flattered," she said, and walked off towards the

tea-table with a glance in which Victoria read many meanings. Mr. Crewe paid no attention either to words, look, or departure.

"I want to talk to you," he said.

"You've made that very plain, at least," answered Victoria. "Why did you pretend it was the view?"

"Some conventionalities have to be observed, I suppose," he said. "Let's go around there. It *is* a good view."

"Don't you think this is a little—marked?" asked Victoria, surveying him with her hands behind her back.

"I can't help it if it is," said Mr. Crewe. "Every hour is valuable to me, and I've got to take my chances when I get 'em. For some reason, you haven't been down at Leith much this summer. Why didn't you telephone me, as I asked you?"

"Because I've suddenly grown dignified, I suppose," she said. "And then, of course, I hesitated to intrude upon such a person of importance as you have become, Humphrey."

"I've always got time to see you," he replied. "I always shall have. But I appreciate your delicacy. That sort of thing counts with a man more than most women know."

"Then I am repaid," said Victoria, "for exercising self-control."

"I find it always pays," declared Mr. Crewe, and he glanced at her with distinct approval. They were skirting the house, and presently came out upon a tiny terrace where young Ridley had made a miniature Italian garden when the Electric dividends had increased, and from which there was a vista of the shallows of the Blue. Here was a stone garden-seat which Mrs. Pomfret had brought from

Italy, and over which she had quarrelled with the customs authorities. Mr. Crewe, with a wave of his hand, signified his pleasure that they should sit, and cleared his throat.

"It's just as well, perhaps," he began, "that we haven't had the chance to see each other earlier. When a man starts out upon an undertaking of the gravest importance, wherein he stakes his reputation, an undertaking for which he is ridiculed and reviled, he likes to have his judgment justified. He likes to be vindicated, especially in the eyes of—people whom he cares about. Personally, I never had any doubt that I should be the next governor, because I knew in the beginning that I had estimated public sentiment correctly. The man who succeeds in this world is the man who has sagacity enough to gauge public sentiment ahead of time, and the courage to act on his beliefs."

Victoria looked at him steadily. He was very calm, and he had one knee crossed over the other.

"And the sagacity," she added, "to choose his lieutenants in the fight."

"Exactly," said Mr. Crewe. "I have always declared, Victoria, that you had a natural aptitude for affairs."

"I have heard my father say," she continued, still maintaining her steady glance, "that Hamilton Tooting is one of the shrewdest politicians he has ever known. Isn't Mr. Tooting one of your right-hand men?"

"He could hardly be called that," Mr. Crewe replied. "In fact, I haven't any what you might call 'right-hand men.' The large problems I have had to decide for myself. As for Tooting, he's well enough in his way; he understands the tricks of the politicians—he's played 'em, I guess. He's uneducated; he's merely a worker. You

see," he went on, "one great reason why I've been so successful is because I've been practical. I've taken materials as I've found them."

"I see," answered Victoria, turning her head and gazing over the terrace at the sparkling reaches of the river. She remembered the close of that wintry afternoon in Mr. Crewe's house at the capital, and she was quite willing to do him exact justice, and to believe that he had forgotten it—which, indeed, was the case.

"I want to say," he continued, "that although I have known and—ahem—admired you for many years, Victoria, what has struck me most forcibly in your favour has been your open-mindedness—especially on the great political questions this summer. I have no idea how much you know about them, but one would naturally have expected you, on account of your father, to be prejudiced. Some time, when I have more leisure, I shall go into them fully with you. And in the meantime I'll have my secretary send you the complete list of my speeches up to date, and I know you will read them carefully."

"You are very kind, Humphrey," she said.

Absorbed in the presentation of his subject (which chanced to be himself), Mr. Crewe did not observe that her lips were parted, and that there were little creases around her eyes.

"And some time," said Mr. Crewe, "when all this has blown over a little, I shall have a talk with your father. He undoubtedly understands that there is scarcely any question of my election. He probably realises, too, that he has been in the wrong, and that railroad domination must cease—he has already made several concessions, as you know. I wish you would tell him from me that when I am governor, I shall make it a point to discuss the whole

matter with him, and that he will find in me no foe of corporations. Justice is what I stand for. Temperamentally, I am too conservative, I am too much of a business man, to tamper with vested interests."

"I will tell him, Humphrey," said Victoria.

Mr. Crewe coughed, and looked at his watch once more.

"And now, having made that clear," he said, "and having only a quarter of an hour before I have to leave to keep an appointment, I am going to take up another subject. And I ask you to believe it is not done lightly, or without due consideration, but as the result of some years of thought."

Victoria turned to him seriously—and yet the creases were still around her eyes.

"I can well believe it, Humphrey," she answered.

"But—have you time?"

"Yes," he said, "I have learned the value of minutes."

"But not of hours, perhaps," she replied.

"That," said Mr. Crewe, indulgently, "is a woman's point of view. A man cannot dally through life, and your kind of woman has no use for a man who dallies. First, I will give you my idea of a woman."

"I am all attention," said Victoria.

"Well," said Mr. Crewe, putting the tops of his fingers together, "she should excel as a housewife. I haven't any use for your so-called intellectual woman. Of course, what I mean by a housewife is something a little less *bourgeoise*; she should be able to conduct an establishment with the neatness and despatch and economy of a well-run hotel. She should be able to seat a table instantly and accurately, giving to the prominent guests the prestige they deserve. Nor have I any sympathy with the notion that makes a

married woman a law unto herself. She enters voluntarily into an agreement whereby she puts herself under the control of her husband: his interests, his career, his—"

"Comfort?" suggested Victoria.

"Yes, his comfort—all that comes first. And his establishment is conducted primarily, and his guests selected, in the interests of his fortunes. Of course, that goes without saying of a man in high place in public life. But he must choose for his wife a woman who is equal to all these things,—to my mind her highest achievement,—who makes the most of the position he gives her, presides at his table and entertainments, and reaches such people as, for any reason, he is unable to reach. I have taken the pains to point out these things in a general way, for obvious reasons. My greatest desire is to be fair."

"What," asked Victoria, with her eyes on the river, "what are the wages?"

Mr. Crewe laughed. Incidentally, he thought her profile very fine.

"I do not believe in flattery," he said, "but I think I should add to the qualifications personality and a sense of humour. I am quite sure I could never live with a woman who didn't have a sense of humour."

"I should think it would be a little difficult," said Victoria, "to get a woman with the qualifications you enumerate and a sense of humour thrown in."

"Infinitely difficult," declared Mr. Crewe, with more ardour than he had yet shown. "I have waited a good many years, Victoria."

"And yet," she said, "you have been happy. You have a perpetual source of enjoyment denied to some people."

"What is that?" he asked. It is natural for a man

to like to hear the points of his character discussed by a discerning woman.

"Yourself," said Victoria, suddenly looking him full in the face. "You are complete, Humphrey, as it is. You are happily married already. Besides," she added, laughing a little, "the qualities you have mentioned—with the exception of the sense of humour—are not those of a wife, but of a business partner of the opposite sex. What you really want is a business partner with something like a fifth interest, and whose name shall not appear in the agreement."

Mr. Crewe laughed again. Nevertheless, he was a little puzzled over this remark.

"I am not sentimental," he began.

"You certainly are not," she said.

"You have a way," he replied, with a shade of reproof in his voice, "you have a way at times of treating serious things with a little less gravity than they deserve. I am still a young man, but I have seen a good deal of life, and I know myself pretty well. It is necessary to treat matrimony from a practical as well as a sentimental point of view. There wouldn't be half the unhappiness and divorces if people took time to do this, instead of rushing off and getting married immediately. And of course it is especially important for a man in my position to study every aspect of the problem before he takes a step."

By this time a deep and absorbing interest in a new aspect of Mr. Crewe's character had taken possession of Victoria.

"And you believe that, by taking thought, you can get the kind of a wife you want?" she asked.

"Certainly," he replied; "does that strike you as strange?"

"A little," said Victoria. "Suppose," she added gently, "suppose that the kind of wife you'd want wouldn't want you?"

Mr. Crewe laughed again.

"That is a contingency which a strong man does not take into consideration," he answered. "Strong men get what they want. But upon my word, Victoria, you have a delicious way of putting things. In your presence I quite forget the problems and perplexities which beset me. That," he said, with delicate meaning, "that is another quality I should desire in a woman."

"It is one, fortunately, that isn't marketable," she said, "and it's the only quality you've mentioned that's worth anything."

"A woman's valuation," said Mr. Crewe.

"If it made you forget your own affairs, it would be priceless."

"Look here, Victoria," cried Mr. Crewe, uncrossing his knees, "joking's all very well, but I haven't time for it to-day. And I'm in a serious mood. I've told you what I want, and now that I've got to go in a few minutes, I'll come to the point. I don't suppose a man could pay a woman a higher compliment than to say that his proposal was the result of some years of thought and study."

Here Victoria laughed outright, but grew serious again at once.

"Unless he proposed to her the day he met her. That would be a real compliment."

"The man," said Mr. Crewe, impatiently, "would be a fool."

"Or else a person of extreme discernment," said Victoria. "And love is lenient with fools. By the way, Humphrey, it has just occurred to me that there's one

quality which some people think necessary in a wife, which you didn't mention."

"What's that?"

"Love," said Victoria.

"Love, of course," he agreed; "I took that for granted."

"I supposed you did," said Victoria, meekly.

"Well, now, to come to the point—" he began again.

But she interrupted him by glancing at the watch on her gown, and rising.

"What's the matter?" he asked, with some annoyance.

"The fifteen minutes are up," she announced. "I cannot take the responsibility of detaining you."

"We will put in tantalising as another attractive quality," he laughed. "I absolve you from all responsibility. Sit down."

"I believe you mentioned obedience," she answered, and sat down again at the end of the bench, resting her chin on her gloved hand, and looking at him. By this time her glances seemed to have gained a visibly disturbing effect. He moved a little nearer to her, took off his hat (which he had hitherto neglected to do), and thrust his hands abruptly into his pockets—as much as to say that he would not be responsible for their movements if they were less free.

"Hang it all, Victoria," he exclaimed, "I'm a practical man, and I try to look at this, which is one of the serious things in life, in a practical way."

"*One* of the serious things," she repeated, as though to herself.

"Yes," he said, "certainly."

"I merely asked to be sure of the weight you gave it. Go on."

"In a practical way, as I was saying. Long ago I suspected that you had most of those qualities."

"I'm overwhelmed, Humphrey," she cried, with her eyes dancing. "But—do you think I could cultivate the rest?"

"Oh, well," said Mr. Crewe, "I put it that way because no woman is perfect, and I dislike superlatives."

"I should think superlatives would be very hard to live with," she reflected. "But—dreadful thought!—suppose I should lack an essential?"

"What—for instance?"

"Love—for instance. But then you did not put it first. It was I who mentioned it, and you who took it for granted."

"*Affection* seems to be a more sensible term for it," he said. "Affection is the lasting and sensible thing. You mentioned a partnership, a word that singularly fits into my notion of marriage. I want to be honest with you, and understate my feelings on that subject."

Victoria, who had been regarding him with a curious look that puzzled him, laughed again.

"I have been hoping you haven't exaggerated them," she replied.

"They're stronger than you think," he declared. "I—I never felt this way in my life before. What I meant to say was, that I never understood running away with a woman."

"That does not surprise me," said Victoria.

"I shouldn't know where to run to," he proclaimed.

"Perhaps the woman would, if you got a clever one. At any rate, it wouldn't matter. One place is as good as another. Some go to Niagara, and some to Coney Island,

and others to Venice. Personally, I should have no particular preference."

"No preference!" he exclaimed.

"I could be happy in Central Park," she declared.

"Fortunately," said Mr. Crewe, "you will never be called upon to make the trial."

Victoria was silent. Her thoughts, for the moment, had flown elsewhere, but Mr. Crewe did not appear to notice this. He fell back into the rounded hollow of the bench, and it occurred to him that he had never quite realised that profile. And what an ornament she would be to his table!

"I think, Humphrey," she said, "that we should be going back."

"One moment, and I'll have finished," he cried. "I've no doubt you are prepared for what I am going to say. I have purposely led up to it, in order that there might be no misunderstanding. In short, I have never seen another woman with personal characteristics so well suited for my life, and I want you to marry me, Victoria. I can offer you the position of the wife of a man with a public career—for which you are so well fitted."

Victoria shook her head slowly, and smiled at him.

"I couldn't fill the position," she said.

"Perhaps," he replied, smiling back at her, "perhaps I am the best judge of that."

"And you thought," she asked slowly, "that I was that kind of a woman?"

"I know it to be a practical certainty," said Mr. Crewe.

"Practical certainties," said Victoria, "are not always truths. If I should sign a contract, which I suppose, as a business man, you would want,—to live up to the letter of your specifications,—even then I could not do it. I should make life a torture for you, Humphrey. You see, I am

honest with you, too— much as your offer dazzles me.” And she shook her head again.

“That,” exclaimed Mr. Crewe, impatiently, “is sheer nonsense. I want you, and I mean to have you.”

There came a look into her eyes which Mr. Crewe did not see, because her face was turned from him.

“I could be happy,” she said, “for days and weeks and years in a hut on the side of Sawanec. I could be happy in a farm-house where I had to do all the work. I am not the model housewife which your imagination depicts, Humphrey. I could live in two rooms and eat at an Italian restaurant—with the right man. And I am afraid the wrong one would wake up one day and discover that I had gone. I am sorry to disillusionise you, but I don’t care a fig for balls and garden-parties and salons. It would be much more fun to run away from them to the queer places of the earth—with the right man. And I should have to possess one essential to put up with—greatness and what you call a public career.”

“And what is that essential?” he asked.

“Love,” said Victoria. He heard the word but faintly, for her face was still turned away from him. “You’ve offered me the things that are attainable by taking thought, by perseverance, by pertinacity, by the outwitting of your fellow-men, by the stacking of coins. And I want—the unattainable, the divine gift which is bestowed, which cannot be acquired. If it could be acquired, Humphrey,” she added, looking at him, “I am sure you would acquire it—if you thought it worth while.”

“I don’t understand you,” he said,—and looked it.

“No,” said Victoria, “I was afraid you wouldn’t. And moreover, you never would. There is no use in my trying to make myself any clearer, and you’ll have to

keep your appointment. I hesitate to contradict you, but I am not the kind of woman you want. That is one reason I cannot marry you. And the other is, that I do not love you."

"You can't be in love with anyone else?" he cried.

"That does seem rather preposterous, I'll admit," she answered. "But if I were, it wouldn't make any difference."

"You won't marry me?" he said, getting to his feet. There was incredulity in his voice, and a certain amount of bewilderment. The thing was indeed incredible!

"No," said Victoria, "I won't."

And he had only to look into her face to see that it was so. Hitherto *nil desperandum* had been a good working motto, but something told him it was useless in this case. He thrust on his hat and pulled out his watch.

"Well," he said, "that settles it. I must say I can't see your point of view—but that settles it. I must say, too, that your refusal is something of a shock after what I had been led to expect after the past few years."

"The person you are in love with led you to expect it, Humphrey, and that person is—yourself. You are in love temporarily with your own ideal of me."

"And your refusal comes at an unfortunate time for me," he continued, not heeding her words, "when I have an affair on my hands of such magnitude, which requires concentrated thought. But I'm not a man to cry, and I'll make the best of it."

"If I thought it were more than a temporary disappointment, I should be sorry for you," said Victoria. "I remember that you felt something like this when Mr. Rutter wouldn't sell you his land. The lady you really want," she added, pointing with her parasol at the house, "is in there, waiting for you."

Mr. Crewe did not reply to this prophecy, but followed Victoria around the house to the group on the lawn, where he bade his hostess a somewhat preoccupied farewell, and bowed distantly to the guests.

"He has so much on his mind," said Mrs. Pomfret. "And oh, I quite forgot—Humphrey!" she cried, calling after him, "Humphrey!"

"Yes," he said, turning before he reached his automobile. "What is it?"

"Alice and I are going to the convention, you know, and I meant to tell you that there would be ten in the party—but I didn't have a chance." Here Mrs. Pomfret glanced at Victoria, who had been joined at once by the tall Englishman. "Can you get tickets for ten?"

Mr. Crewe made a memorandum.

"Yes," he said, "I'll get the tickets—but I don't see what you want to go for."

CHAPTER X.

MORE ADVENTURES.

VICTORIA had not, of course, confided in Beatrice Chillingham what had occurred in the garden, although that lady had exhibited the liveliest interest, and had had her suspicions. After Mr. Crewe's departure Mr. Rangely, the tall young Englishman, had renewed his attentions assiduously, although during the interval in the garden he had found Miss Chillingham a person of discernment.

"She's not going to marry *that* chap, is she, Miss Chillingham?" he had asked.

"No," said Beatrice; "you have my word for it, she isn't."

As she was leaving, Mrs. Pomfret had taken Victoria's hand and drawn her aside, and looked into her face with a meaning smile.

"My dear!" she exclaimed, "he particularly asked that you be invited."

"Who?" said Victoria.

"Humphrey. He stipulated that you should be here."

"Then I'm very much obliged to him," said Victoria, "for I've enjoyed myself immensely. I like your Englishman so much."

"Do you?" said Mrs. Pomfret, searching Victoria's face, while her own brightened. "He's heir to one of the really good titles, and he has an income of his own. I couldn't put him up here, in this tiny box, because I have Mrs. Froude. We are going to take him to the convention—and if you'd care to go, Victoria—?"

Victoria laughed.

"It isn't as serious as that," she said. "And I'm afraid I can't go to the convention—I have some things to do in the neighbourhood."

Mrs. Pomfret looked wise.

"He's a most attractive man, with the *best* prospects. It would be a splendid match for you, Victoria."

"Mrs. Pomfret," replied Victoria, wavering between amusement and a desire to be serious, "I haven't the slightest intention of making what you call a 'match.'" And there was in her words a ring of truth not to be mistaken.

Mrs. Pomfret kissed her.

"One never can tell what may happen," she said. "Think of him, Victoria. And your dear mother—per-

haps you will know some day what the responsibility is of seeing a daughter well placed in life."

Victoria coloured, and withdrew her hand.

"I fear that time is a long way off, Mrs. Pomfret," she replied.

"I think so much of Victoria," Mrs. Pomfret declared a moment later to her guest; "she's like my own daughter. But at times she's so hopelessly unconventional. Why, I believe Rangely's actually going home with her."

"He asked her to drop him at the Inn," said Mrs. Froude. "He's head over heels in love already."

"It would be *such* a relief to dear Rose," sighed Mrs. Pomfret.

"I like the girl," replied Mrs. Froude, dryly. "She has individuality, and knows her own mind. Whoever she marries will have something to him."

"I devoutly hope so!" said Mrs. Pomfret.

It was quite true that Mr. Arthur Rangely had asked Victoria to drop him at the Inn. But when they reached it he made another request.

"Do you mind if I go a bit farther, Miss Flint?" he suggested. "I'd rather like the walk back."

Victoria laughed.

"Do come," she said.

He admired the country, but he looked at Victoria, and asked an hundred exceedingly frank questions about Leith, about Mrs. Pomfret, whom he had met at his uncle's seat in Devonshire, and about Mr. Crewe and the railroads in politics. Many of these Victoria parried, and she came rapidly to the conclusion that Mr. Arthur Rangely was a more astute person than—to a casual observer—he would seem.

He showed no inclination to fix the limits of his walk,

and made no protest as she drove under the stone archway at the entrance of Fairview. Victoria was amused and interested, and she decided that she liked Mr. Rangely.

"Will you come up for tea?" she asked. "I'll send you home."

He accepted with alacrity. They had reached the first turn when their attention was caught by the sight of a buggy ahead of them, and facing towards them. The horse, with the reins hanging loosely over the shafts, had strayed to the side of the driveway and was contentedly eating the shrubbery that lined it. Inside the vehicle, hunched up in the corner of the seat, was a man who presented an appearance of helplessness which struck them both with a sobering effect.

"Is the fellow drunk?" said Mr. Rangely.

Victoria's answer was a little cry which startled him, and drew his look to her. She had touched her horse with the whip, and her eyes had widened in real alarm.

"It's Hilary Vane!" she exclaimed. "I—I wonder what can have happened!"

She handed the reins to Mr. Rangely, and sprang out and flew to Hilary's side.

"Mr. Vane!" she cried. "What's the matter? Are you ill?"

She had never seen him look so. To her he had always been as one on whom pity would be wasted, as one who long ago had established his credit with the universe to his own satisfaction. But now, suddenly, intense pity welled up within her, and even in that moment she wondered if it could be because he was Austen's father. His hands were at his sides, his head was fallen forward a little, and his face was white. But his eyes frightened her most; instead of the old, semi-defiant ex-

pression which she remembered from childhood, they had in them a dumb suffering that went to her heart. He looked at her, tried to straighten up, and fell back again.

"N-nothing's the matter," he said, "nothing. A little spell. I'll be all right in a moment."

Victoria did not lose an instant, but climbed into the buggy at his side and gathered up the reins, and drew the fallen lap-robe over his knees.

"I'm going to take you back to Fairview," she said. "And we'll telephone for a doctor."

But she had underrated the amount of will left in him. He did not move, though indeed if he had seized the reins from her hands, he could have given her no greater effect of surprise. Life came back into the eyes at the summons, and dominance into the voice, although he breathed heavily.

"No, you're not," he said; "no, you're not. I'm going to Ripton—do you understand? I'll be all right in a minute, and I'll take the lines."

Victoria, when she got over her astonishment at this, reflected quickly. She glanced at him, and the light of his expression was already fading. There was some reason why he did not wish to go back to Fairview, and commonsense told her that agitation was not good for him; besides, they would have to telephone to Ripton for a physician, and it was quicker to drive there. Quicker to drive in her own runabout, did she dare to try to move him into it. She made up her mind.

"Please follow on behind with that trap," she called out to Rangely; "I'm going to Ripton."

He nodded understandingly, admiringly, and Victoria started Hilary's horse out of the bushes towards the

entrance way. From time to time she let her eyes rest upon him anxiously.

"Are you comfortable?" she asked.

"Yes," he said, "yes. I'm all right. I'll be able to drive in a minute."

But the minutes passed, and he made no attempt to take the reins. Victoria had drawn the whalebone whip from its socket, and was urging on the horse as fast as humanity would permit; and the while she was aware that Hilary's look was fixed upon her—in fact, never left her. Once or twice, in spite of her anxiety to get him home, Victoria blushed faintly, as she wondered what he was thinking about.

And all the while she asked herself what it was that had brought him to this condition. Victoria knew sufficient of life and had visited hospitals enough to understand that mental causes were generally responsible for such breakdowns—Hilary had had a shock. She remembered how in her childhood he had been the object of her particular animosity; how she used to put out her tongue at him, and imitate his manner, and how he had never made the slightest attempt to conciliate her; most people of this sort are sensitive to the instincts of children, but Hilary had not been. She remembered—how long ago it seemed now!—the day she had given him, in deviltry, the clipping about Austen shooting Mr. Blodgett.

The Hilary Vane who sat beside her to-day was not the same man. It was unaccountable, but he was not. Nor could this changed estimate of him be attributed to her regard for Austen, for she recalled a day only a few months since—in June—when he had come up to Fairview and she was standing on the lawn, and she had looked at him without recognition; she had not, then, been

able to bring herself to bow to him; to her childhood distaste had been added the deeper resentment of Austen's wrongs. Her early instincts about Hilary had been vindicated, for he had treated his son abominably and driven Austen from his mother's home. To misunderstand and maltreat Austen Vane, of all people! Austen, whose consideration for his father had been what it had! Could it be that Hilary felt remorse? Could it be that he loved Austen in some peculiar manner all his own?

Victoria knew now—so strangely—that the man beside her was capable of love, and she had never felt that way about Hilary Vane. And her mind was confused, and her heart was troubled and wrung. Insight flashed upon her of the terrible loneliness of a life surrounded by outstretched, loving arms to which one could not fly; scenes from a famous classic she had read with a favourite teacher at school came to her, and she knew that she was the witness of a retribution, of a suffering beyond conception of a soul prepared for suffering,—not physical suffering, but of that torture which is the meaning of hell.

However, there was physical suffering. It came and went, and at such moments she saw the traces of it in the tightening of his lips, and longed with womanly intuition to alleviate it. She had not spoken—although she could have cried aloud; she knew not what to say. And then suddenly she reached out and touched his hand. Nor could she have accounted for the action.

"Are you in much pain?" she asked.

She felt him tremble.

"No," he said; "it's only a spell—I've had 'em before. I—I can drive in a few minutes."

"And do you think," she asked, "that I would allow you to go the rest of the way alone?"

"I guess I ought to thank you for comin' with me," he said.

Victoria looked at him and smiled. And it was an illuminating smile for her as well as for Hilary. Suddenly, by that strange power of sympathy which the unselfish possess, she understood the man, understood Austen's patience with him and affection for him. Suddenly she had pierced the hard layers of the outer shell, and had heard the imprisoned spirit crying with a small persistent voice,—a spirit stifled for many years and starved—and yet it lived and struggled still.

Yes, and that spirit itself must have felt her own reaching out to it—who can say? And how it must have striven again for utterance!

"It was good of you to come," he said.

"It was only common humanity," she answered, touching the horse.

"Common humanity," he repeated. "You'd have done it for anybody along the road, would you?"

At this remark, so characteristic of Hilary, Victoria hesitated. She understood it now. And yet she hesitated to give him an answer that was hypocritical.

"I have known you all my life, Mr. Vane, and you are a very old friend of my father's."

"Old," he repeated, "yes, that's it. I'm ready for the scrap-heap—better have let me lie, Victoria."

Victoria started. A new surmise had occurred to her upon which she did not like to dwell.

"You have worked too hard, Mr. Vane—you need a rest. And I have been telling father that, too. You both need a rest."

He shook his head.

"I'll never get it," he said. "Stopping work won't give it to me."

She pondered on these words as she guided the horse over a crossing. And all that Austen had said to her, all that she had been thinking of for a year past, helped her to grasp their meaning. But she wondered still more at the communion which, all at once, had been established between Hilary Vane and herself, and why he was saying these things to her. It was all so unreal and inexplicable.

"I can imagine that people who have worked hard all their lives must feel that way," she answered, though her voice was not as steady as she could have wished. "You—you have so much to live for."

Her colour rose. She was thinking of Austen—and she knew that Hilary Vane knew that she was thinking of Austen. Moreover, she had suddenly grasped the fact that the gentle but persistently strong influence of the son's character had brought about the change in the father. Hilary Vane's lips closed again, as in pain, and she divined the reason.

Victoria knew the house in Hanover Street, with its classic porch, with its certain air of distinction and stability, and long before she had known it as the Austen residence she remembered wondering who lived in it. The house had individuality, and (looked at from the front) almost perfect proportions; consciously it bespoke the gentility of its builders. Now she drew up before it and called to Mr. Rangely, who was abreast, to tie his horse and ring the bell. Hilary was already feeling with his foot for the step of the buggy.

"I'm all right," he insisted; "I can manage now," but Victoria seized his arm with a firm, detaining hand.

"Please wait, Mr. Vane," she pleaded.

But the feeling of shame at his helplessness was strong.

"It's over now. I—I can walk. I'm much obliged to you, Victoria—much obliged."

Fortunately Hilary's horse showed no inclination to go any farther—even to the stable. And Victoria held on to his arm. He ceased to protest, and Mr. Rangely quickly tied the other horse and came to Victoria's aid. Supported by the young Englishman, Hilary climbed the stone steps and reached the porch, declaring all the while that he needed no assistance, and could walk alone. Victoria rang the bell, and after an interval the door was opened by Euphrasia Cotton.

Euphrasia stood upright with her hand on the knob, and her eyes flashed over the group and rested fixedly on the daughter of Mr. Flint.

"Mr. Vane was not very well," Victoria explained, "and we came home with him."

"I'm all right," said Hilary, once more, and to prove it he stepped—not very steadily—across the threshold into the hall, and sat down on a chair which had had its place at the foot of the stairs from time immemorial. Euphrasia stood still.

"I think," said Victoria, "that Mr. Vane had better see a doctor. Have you a telephone?"

"No, we haven't," said Euphrasia.

Victoria turned to Mr. Rangely, who had been a deeply interested spectator to this scene.

"A little way down the street, on the other side, Dr. Tredway lives. You will see his sign."

"Yes."

"And if he isn't in, go to the hospital. It's only a few doors farther on."

"I'll wait," said Victoria, simply, when he had gone; "my father will wish to know about Mr. Vane."

"Hold on," said Hilary, "I haven't any use for a doctor—I won't see one. I know what the trouble is, and I'm all right."

Victoria became aware for the first time that Hilary Vane's housekeeper had not moved; that Euphrasia Cotton was still staring at her in a most disconcerting manner, and was paying no attention whatever to Hilary.

"Come in and set down," she said; and seeing Victoria glance at Hilary's horse, she added, "Oh, he'll stand there till doomsday."

Victoria, thinking that the situation would be less awkward, accepted the invitation, and Euphrasia shut the door. The hall, owing to the fact that the shutters of the windows by the stairs were always closed, was in semi-darkness. Victoria longed to let in the light, to take this strange, dried-up housekeeper and shake her into some semblance of natural feeling. And this was Austen's home! It was to this house, made gloomy by these people, that he had returned every night! Infinitely depressed, she felt that she must take some action, or cry aloud.

"Mr. Vane," she said, laying a hand upon his shoulder, "I think you ought, at least, to lie down for a little while. Isn't there a sofa in—in the parlour?" she asked Euphrasia.

"You can't get him to do anything," Euphrasia replied, with decision; "he'll die some day for want of a little commonsense. I shouldn't wonder if he was took off soon."

"Oh!" cried Victoria. She could think of no words to answer this remark.

"It wouldn't surprise me," Euphrasia continued. "He

fell down the stairs here, not long ago, and went right on about his business. He's never paid any attention to anybody, and I guess it's a mite late to expect him to begin now. Won't you set down?"

There was another chair against the low wainscoting, and Victoria drew it over beside Hilary and sat down in it. He did not seem to notice the action, and Euphrasia continued to stand. Standing seemed to be the natural posture of this remarkable woman, Victoria thought—a posture of vigilance, of defiance. A clock of one of the Austen grandfathers stood obscurely at the back of the hall, and the measured swing of its pendulum was all that broke the silence. *This* was Austen's home. It seemed impossible for her to realise that he could be the product of this environment—until a portrait on the opposite wall, above the stairs, came out of the gloom and caught her eye like the glow of light. At first, becoming aware of it with a start, she thought it a likeness of Austen himself. Then she saw that the hair was longer, and more wavy than his, and fell down a little over the velvet collar of a coat with a wide lapel and brass buttons, and that the original of this portrait had worn a stock. The face had not quite the strength of Austen's, she thought, but a wondrous sweetness and intellect shone from it, like an expression she had seen on his face. The chin rested on the hand,—an intellectual hand,—and the portrait brought to her mind that of a young English statesman she had seen in the National Gallery in London.

"That's Channing Austen,—he was minister to Spain."

Victoria started. It was Euphrasia who was speaking, and unmistakable pride was in her voice.

Fortunately for Victoria, who would not in the least have known what to reply, steps were heard on the porch,

and Euphrasia opened the door. Mr. Rangely had returned.

"Here's the doctor, Miss Flint," he said, "and I'll wait for you outside."

Victoria rose as young Dr. Tredway came forward. They were old friends, and the doctor, it may be recalled, had been chiefly responsible for the preservation of the life of Mr. Zebulun Meader.

"I have sent for you, Doctor," she said, "against instructions and on my own responsibility. Mr. Vane is ill, although he refuses to admit it."

Dr. Tredway had a respect for Victoria and her opinions, and he knew Hilary. He opened the door a little wider, and looked critically at Mr. Vane.

"It's nothing but a spell," Hilary insisted. "I've had 'em before. I suppose it's natural that they should scare the women-folks some."

"What kind of a spell was it, Mr. Vane?" asked the doctor.

"It isn't worth talking about," said Hilary. "You might as well pick up that case of yours and go home again. I'm going down to the square in a little while."

"You see," Euphrasia put in, "he's made up his mind to kill himself."

"Perhaps," said the doctor, smiling a little, "Mr. Vane wouldn't object to Miss Flint telling me what happened."

Victoria glanced at the doctor and hesitated. Her sympathy for Hilary, her new understanding of him, urged her on—and yet never in her life had she been made to feel so distinctly an intruder. Here was the doctor, with his case; here was this extraordinary housekeeper, apparently ready to let Hilary walk to the square, if he wished, and to shut the door on their backs; and here was Hilary

himself, who threatened at any moment to make his word good and depart from their midst. Only the fact that she was convinced that Hilary was in real danger made her relate, in a few brief words, what had occurred, and when she had finished Mr. Vane made no comment whatever.

Dr. Tredway turned to Hilary.

"I am going to take a mean advantage of you, Mr. Vane," he said, "and sit here awhile and talk to you. Would you object to waiting a little while, Miss Flint? I have something to say to you," he added significantly, "and this meeting will save me a trip to Fairview."

"Certainly I'll wait," she said.

"You can come along with me," said Euphrasia, "if you've a notion to."

Victoria was of two minds whether to accept this invitation. She had an intense desire to get outside, but this was counterbalanced by a sudden curiosity to see more of this strange woman who loved but one person in the world. Tom Gaylord had told Victoria that. She followed Euphrasia to the back of the hall.

"There's the parlour," said Euphrasia; "it's never be'n used since Mrs. Vane died,—but there it is."

"Oh," said Victoria, with a glance into the shadowy depths of the room, "please don't open it for me. Can't we go," she added, with an inspiration, "can't we go into—the kitchen?" She knew it was Euphrasia's place.

"Well," said Euphrasia, "I shouldn't have thought you'd care much about kitchens." And she led the way onward, through the little passage, to the room where she had spent most of her days. It was flooded with level, yellow rays of light that seemed to be searching the corners in vain for dust. Victoria paused in the doorway.

"I'm afraid you do me an injustice," she said. "I like some kitchens."

"You don't look as if you knew much about 'em," was Euphrasia's answer. With Victoria once again in the light, Euphrasia scrutinised her with appalling frankness, taking in every detail of her costume and at length raising her eyes to the girl's face. Victoria coloured. On her visits about the country-side she had met women of Euphrasia's type before, and had long ago ceased to be dismayed by their manner. But her instinct detected in Euphrasia a hostility for which she could not account.

In that simple but exquisite gown which so subtly suited her, the creation of which had aroused the artist in a celebrated Parisian dressmaker, Victoria was, indeed, a strange visitant in that kitchen. She took a seat by the window, and an involuntary exclamation of pleasure escaped her as her eyes fell upon the little, old-fashioned flower garden beneath it. The act and the exclamation for the moment disarmed Euphrasia.

"They were Sarah Austen's—Mrs. Vane's," she explained, "just as she planted them the year she died. I've always kept 'em just so."

"Mrs. Vane must have loved flowers," said Victoria.

"Loved 'em! They were everything to her—and the wild flowers, too. She used to wander off and spend whole days in the country, and come back after sunset with her arms full."

"It was nature she loved," said Victoria, in a low voice.

"That was it—nature," said Euphrasia. "She loved all nature. There wasn't a living, creeping thing that wahn't her friend. I've seen birds eat out of her hand in that window where you're settin', and she'd say to me,

'Phrasie, keep still! They'd love you, too, if they only knew you, but they're afraid you'll scrub 'em if you get hold of them, the way you used to scrub me.'

Victoria smiled—but it was a smile that had tears in it. Euphrasia Cotton was standing in the shaft of sunlight at the other window, staring at the little garden.

"Yes, she used to say funny things like that, to make you laugh when you were all ready to cry. There wahn't many folks understood her. She knew every path and hilltop within miles of here, and every brook and spring, and she used to talk about that mountain just as if it was alive."

Victoria caught her breath.

"Yes," continued Euphrasia, "the mountain was alive for her. 'He's angry to-day, Phrasie. That's because you lost your temper and scolded Hilary.' It's a queer thing, but there have been hundreds of times since when he needed scoldin' bad, and I've looked at the mountain and held my tongue. It was just as if I saw *her* with that half-whimsical, half-reproachful expression in her eyes, holding up her finger at me. And there were other mornings when she'd say, 'The mountain's lonesome to-day, he wants me.' And I vow, I'd look at the mountain and it would seem lonesome. That sounds like nonsense, don't it?" Euphrasia demanded, with a sudden sharpness.

"No," said Victoria, "it seems very real to me."

The simplicity, the very ring of truth, and above all the absolute lack of self-consciousness in the girl's answer sustained the spell.

"She'd go when the mountain called her, it didn't make any difference whether it was raining—rain never appeared to do her any hurt. Nothin' *natural* ever did her any hurt. When she was a little child flittin' about

like a wild creature, and she'd come in drenched to the skin, it was all I could do to catch her and change her clothes. She'd laugh at me. 'We're meant to be wet once in awhile, Phrasie,' she'd say; 'that's what the rain's for, to wet us. It washes some of the wickedness out of us.' It was the unnatural things that hurt her—the unkind words and makin' her act against her nature. 'Phrasie,' she said once, 'I can't pray in the meeting-house with my eyes shut—I can't, I can't. I seem to know what they're all wishing for when they pray,—for more riches, and more comfort, and more security, and more importance. And God is such a long way off. I can't feel Him, and the pew hurts my back.' She used to read me some, out of a book of poetry, and one verse I got by heart—I guess her prayers were like that."

"Do you—remember the verse?" asked Victoria.

Euphrasia went to a little shelf in the corner of the kitchen and produced a book, which she opened and handed to Victoria.

"There's the verse!" she said; "read it aloud. I guess you're better at that than I am."

And Victoria read:—

*"Higher still and higher
From the earth thou springest
Like a cloud of fire;
The blue deep thou wingest,
And singing still dost soar, and soaring ever singest."*

Victoria let fall the volume on her lap.

"There's another verse in that book she liked," said Euphrasia, "but it always was sad to me."

Victoria took the book, and read again:—

*"Weary wind, who wanderest
Like the world's rejected guest,
Hast thou still some secret nest
On the tree or billow?"*

Euphrasia laid the volume tenderly on the shelf, and turned and faced Victoria.

"*She* was unhappy like that before she died," she exclaimed, and added, with a fling of her head towards the front of the house, "*He* killed her."

"Oh, no!" cried Victoria, involuntarily rising to her feet. "Oh, no! I'm sure he didn't mean to. He didn't understand her!"

"He killed her," Euphrasia repeated. "Why didn't he understand her? She was just as simple as a child, and just as trusting, and just as loving. He made her unhappy, and now he's driven her son out of her house, and made *him* unhappy. He's all of her I have left, and I won't see him unhappy."

Victoria summoned her courage.

"Don't you think," she asked bravely, "that Mr. Austen Vane ought to be told that his father is—in this condition?"

"No," said Euphrasia, determinedly. "Hilary will have to send for him. This time it'll be Austen's victory."

"But hasn't he had—a victory?" Victoria persisted earnestly. "Isn't this—victory enough?"

"What do you mean?" Euphrasia cried sharply.

"I mean," she answered, in a low voice, "I mean that Mr. Vane's son is responsible for his condition to-day. Oh—not consciously so. But the cause of this trouble is mental—can't you see it? The cause of this trouble is remorse. Can't you see that it has eaten into his soul? Do you wish a greater victory than this, or a sadder one?"

Hilary Vane will not ask for his son—because he cannot. He has no more power to send that message than a man shipwrecked on an island. He can only give signals of distress—that some may heed. Would *she* have waited for such a victory as you demand? And does Austen Vane desire it? Don't you think that he would come to his father if he knew? And have you any right to keep the news from him? Have you any right to decide what their vengeance shall be?"

Euphrasia had stood mute as she listened to these words which she had so little expected, but her eyes flashed and her breath came quickly. Never had she been so spoken to! Never had any living soul come between her and her cherished object—the breaking of the heart of Hilary Vane! Nor, indeed, had that object ever been so plainly set forth as Victoria had set it forth. And this woman who dared to do this had herself brought unhappiness to Austen. Euphrasia had almost forgotten that, such had been the strange harmony of their communion.

"Have *you* the right to tell Austen?" she demanded.

"Have I?" Victoria repeated. And then, as the full meaning of the question came to her, the colour flooded into her face, and she would have fled, if she could, but Euphrasia's words came in a torrent.

"You've made him unhappy, as well as Hilary. He loves you—but he wouldn't speak of it to you. Oh, no, he didn't tell me who it was, but I never rested till I found out. He never would have told me about it at all, or anybody else, but that I guessed it. I saw he was unhappy, and I calculated it wasn't Hilary alone made him so. One night he came in here, and I knew all at once—somehow—there was a woman to blame, and I asked him, and he couldn't lie to me. He said it wasn't any-

body's fault but his own—he wouldn't say any more than that, except that he hadn't spoken to her. I always expected the time was coming when there would be—a woman. And I never thought the woman lived that he'd love who wouldn't love him. I can't see how any woman could help lovin' him.

"And then I found out it was that railroad. It came between Sarah Austen and her happiness, and now it's come between Austen and his. Perhaps you don't love him!" cried Euphrasia. "Perhaps you're too rich and high and mighty. Perhaps you're a-going to marry that fine young man who came with you in the buggy. Since I heard who you was, I haven't had a happy hour. Let me tell you there's no better blood in the land than the Austen blood. I won't mention the Vanes. If you've led him on, if you've deceived him, I hope you may be unhappy as Sarah Austen was—"

"Don't!" pleaded Victoria; "don't! Please don't!" and she seized Euphrasia by the arms, as though seeking by physical force to stop the intolerable flow of words. "Oh, you don't know me; you can't understand me if you say that. How can you be so cruel?"

In another moment she had gone, leaving Euphrasia standing in the middle of the floor, staring after her through the doorway.

CHAPTER XI.

THE FOCUS OF WRATH.

VICTORIA, after leaving Euphrasia, made her way around the house towards Mr. Rangely, who was waiting

in the runabout, her one desire for the moment being to escape. Before she had reached the sidewalk under the trees, Dr. Tredway had interrupted her.

"Miss Flint," he called out, "I wanted to say a word to you before you went."

"Yes," she said, stopping and turning to him.

He paused a moment before speaking, as he looked into her face.

"I don't wonder this has upset you a little," he said; "a reaction always comes afterwards—even with the strongest of us."

"I am all right," she replied, unconsciously repeating Hilary's words. "How is Mr. Vane?"

"You have done a splendid thing," said the doctor, gravely. And he continued, after a moment: "It is Mr. Vane I wanted to speak to you about. He is an intimate friend, I believe, of your father's, as well as Mr. Flint's right-hand man in—in a business way in this State. Mr. Vane himself will not listen to reason. I have told him plainly that if he does not drop all business at once, the chances are ten to one that he will forfeit his life very shortly. I understand that there is a—a convention to be held at the capital the day after to-morrow, and that it is Mr. Vane's firm intention to attend it. I take the liberty of suggesting that you lay these facts before your father, as Mr. Flint probably has more influence with Hilary Vane than any other man. However," he added, seeing Victoria hesitate, "if there is any reason why you should not care to speak to Mr. Flint—"

"Oh, no," said Victoria; "I'll speak to him, certainly. I was going to ask you—have you thought of Mr. Austen Vane? He might be able to do something."

"Of course," said the doctor, after a moment, "it is

an open secret that Austen and his father have—have, in short, never agreed. They are not now on speaking terms.”

“Don’t you think,” asked Victoria, summoning her courage, “that Austen Vane ought to be told?”

“Yes,” the doctor repeated decidedly, “I am sure of it. Everybody who knows Austen Vane as I do has the greatest admiration for him. You probably remember him in that Meader case,—he isn’t a man one would be likely to forget,—and I know that this quarrel with his father isn’t of Austen’s seeking.”

“Oughtn’t he to be told—at once?” said Victoria.

“Yes,” said the doctor; “time is valuable, and we can’t predict what Hilary will do. At any rate, Austen ought to know—but the trouble is, he’s at Jenney’s farm. I met him on the way out there just before your friend the Englishman caught me. And unfortunately I have a case which I cannot neglect. But I can send word to him.”

“I know where Jenney’s farm is,” said Victoria; “I’ll drive home that way.”

“Well,” exclaimed Dr. Tredway, heartily, “that’s good of you. Somebody who knows Hilary’s situation ought to see him, and I can think of no better messenger than you.”

And he helped her into the runabout.

Young Mr. Rangely being a gentleman, he refrained from asking Victoria questions on the drive out of Ripton, and expressed the greatest willingness to accompany her on this errand and to see her home afterwards. He had been deeply impressed, but he felt instinctively that after such a serious occurrence, this was not the time to continue to give hints of his admiration. He had heard in England that many American women whom he would be

likely to meet socially were superficial and pleasure-loving; and Arthur Rangely came of a family which had long been cited as a vindication of a government by aristocracy,—a family which had never shirked responsibilities. It is not too much to say that he had pictured Victoria among his future tenantry; she had appealed to him first as a woman, but the incident of the afternoon had revealed her to him, as it were, under fire.

They spoke quietly of places they both had visited, of people whom they knew in common, until they came to the hills—the very threshold of Paradise on that September evening. Those hills never failed to move Victoria, and they were garnished this evening in no earthly colours,—rose-lighted on the billowy western pasture slopes and pearl in the deep clefts of the streams, and the lordly form of Sawanec shrouded in indigo against a flame of orange. And orange faded, by the subtlest of colour changes, to azure in which swam, so confidently, a silver evening star.

In silence they drew up before Mr. Jenney's ancestral trees, and through the deepening shadows beneath these the windows of the farm-house glowed with welcoming light. At Victoria's bidding Mr. Rangely knocked to ask for Austen Vane, and Austen himself answered the summons. He held a book in his hand, and as Rangely spoke she saw Austen's look turn quickly to her, and met it through the gathering gloom between them. In an instant he was at her side, looking up questioningly into her face, and the telltale blood leaped into hers. What must he think of her for coming again? She could not speak of her errand too quickly.

"Mr. Vane, I came to leave a message."

"Yes?" he said, and glanced at the broad-shouldered,

well-groomed figure of Mr. Rangely, who was standing at a discreet distance.

"Your father has had an attack of some kind,—please don't be alarmed, he seems to be recovered now,—and I thought and Dr. Tredway thought you ought to know about it. The doctor could not leave Ripton, and I offered to come and tell you."

"An attack?" he repeated.

"Yes." And she related simply how she had found Hilary at Fairview, and how she had driven him home. But, during the whole of her recital, she could not rid herself of the apprehension that he was thinking her interference unwarranted, her coming an indelicate repetition of the other visit. As he stood there listening in the gathering dusk, she could not tell from his face what he thought. His expression, when serious, had a determined, combative, almost grim note in it, which came from a habit he had of closing his jaw tightly; and his eyes were like troubled skies through which there trembled an occasional flash of light.

Victoria had never felt his force so strongly as now, and never had he seemed more distant; at times—she had thought—she had had glimpses of his soul; to-night he was inscrutable, and never had she realised the power (which she had known he must possess) of making himself so. And to her? Her pride forbade her recalling at that moment the confidences which had passed between them and which now seemed to have been so impossible. He was serious because he was listening to serious news—she told herself. But it was more than this: he had shut himself up, he was impenetrable. Shame seized her; yes, and anger; and shame again at the remembrance of her talk with Euphrasia—and anger once more. Could

he think that she would make advances to tempt his honour, and risk his good opinion and her own?

Confidence is like a lute-string, giving forth sweet sounds in its perfection; there are none so discordant as when it snaps.

Victoria scarcely heard Austen's acknowledgments of her kindness, so perfunctory did they seem, so unlike the man she had known; and her own protestations that she had done nothing to merit his thanks were to her quite as unreal. She introduced him to the Englishman.

"Mr. Rangely has been good enough to come with me," she said.

"I've never seen anybody act with more presence of mind than Miss Flint," Rangely declared, as he shook Austen's hand. "She did just the right thing, without wasting any time whatever."

"I'm sure of it," said Austen, cordially enough. But to Victoria's keener ear, other tones which she had heard at other times were lacking. Nor could she, clever as she was, see the palpable reason standing before her!

"I say," said Rangely, as they drove away, "he strikes me as a remarkably sound chap, Miss Flint. There is something unusual about him, something clean cut."

"I've heard other people say so," Victoria replied. For the first time since she had known him, praise of Austen was painful to her. What was this curious attraction that roused the interest of all who came in contact with him? The doctor had it, Mr. Redbrook, Jabe Jenney,—even Hamilton Tooting, she remembered. And he attracted women as well as men—it must be so. Certainly her own interest in him—a man beyond the radius of her sphere—and their encounters had been strange enough! And must she go on all her life hearing praises

of him? Of one thing she was sure—who was not?—that Austen Vane had a future. He was the type of man which is inevitably impelled into places of trust.

Manly men, as a rule, do not understand women. They humour them blindly, seek to comfort them—if they weep—with caresses, laugh with them if they have leisure, and respect their curious and unaccountable moods by keeping out of the way. Such a husband was Arthur Rangely destined to make; a man who had seen any number of women and understood none,—as wondrous mechanisms. He had merely acquired the faculty of appraisal, although this does not mean that he was incapable of falling in love.

Mr. Rangely could not account for the sudden access of gaiety in Victoria's manner as they drove to Fairview through the darkness, nor did he try. He took what the gods sent him, and was thankful. When he reached Fairview he was asked to dinner, as he could not possibly get back to the Inn in time. Mr. Flint had gone to Sumner with the engineers, leaving orders to be met at the East Tunbridge station at ten; and Mrs. Flint, still convalescent, had dined in her sitting-room. Victoria sat opposite her guest in the big dining-room, and Mr. Rangely pronounced the occasion decidedly jolly. He had, he proclaimed, with the exception of Mr. Vane's deplorable accident, never spent a better day in his life.

Victoria wondered at her own spirits, which were feverish, as she listened to transatlantic gossip about girls she had known who had married Mr. Rangely's friends, and stories of Westminster and South Africa, and certain experiences of Mr. Rangely's at other places than Leith on the American continent, which he had grown sufficiently confidential to relate. At times, lifting her eyes to him

as he sat smoking after dinner on the other side of the library fire, she almost doubted his existence. He had come into her life at one o'clock that day—it seemed an eternity since. And a subconscious voice, heard but not heeded, told her that in the awakening from this curious dream he would be associated in her memory with tragedy, just as a tune or a book or a game of cards reminds one of painful periods of one's existence. To-morrow the episode would be a nightmare; to-night her one desire was to prolong it.

And poor Mr. Rangely little imagined the part he was playing—as little as he deserved it. Reluctant to leave, propriety impelled him to ask for a trap at ten, and it was half past before he finally made his exit from the room with a promise to pay his respects soon—very soon.

Victoria stood before the fire listening to the sound of the wheels gradually growing fainter, and her mind refused to work. Hanover Street, Mr. Jenney's farm-house, were unrealities too. Ten minutes later—if she had marked the interval—came the sound of wheels again, this time growing louder. Then she heard a voice in the hall, her father's voice.

"Towers, who was that?"

"A young gentleman, sir, who drove home with Miss Victoria. I didn't get his name, sir."

"Has Miss Victoria retired?"

"She's in the library, sir. Here are some telegrams, Mr. Flint."

Victoria heard her father tearing open the telegrams and walking towards the library with slow steps as he read them. She did not stir from her place before the fire. She saw him enter and, with a characteristic move-

ment which had become almost habitual of late, crush the telegrams in front of him with both hands.

"Well, Victoria?" he said.

"Well, father?"

It was characteristic of him, too, that he should momentarily drop the conversation, unravel the ball of telegrams, read one, crush them once more,—a process that seemed to give him relief. He glanced at his daughter—she had not moved. Whatever Mr. Flint's original character may have been in his long-forgotten youth on the wind-swept hill farm in Truro, his methods of attack lacked directness now; perhaps a long business and political experience were responsible for this trait.

"Your mother didn't come down to dinner, I suppose."

"No," said Victoria.

"Simpson tells me the young bull got loose and cut himself badly. He says it's the fault of the Eben Fitch you got me to hire."

"I don't believe it was Eben's fault—Simpson doesn't like him," Victoria replied.

"Simpson tells me Fitch drinks."

"Let a man get a bad name," said Victoria, "and Simpson will take care that he doesn't lose it." The unexpected necessity of defending one of her *protégés* aroused her. "I've made it a point to see Eben every day for the last three months, and he hasn't touched a drop. He's one of the best workers we have on the place."

"I've got too much on my mind to put up with that kind of thing," said Mr. Flint, "and I won't be worried here on the place. I *can* get capable men to tend cattle, at least. I have to put up with political rascals who rob and deceive me as soon as my back is turned, I have to

put up with inefficiency and senility, but I won't have it at home."

"Fitch will be transferred to the gardener if you think best," she said.

It suddenly occurred to Victoria, in the light of a new discovery, that in the past her father's irritability had not extended to her. And this discovery, she knew, ought to have some significance, but she felt unaccountably indifferent to it. Mr. Flint walked to a window at the far end of the room and flung apart the tightly closed curtains before it.

"I never can get used to this new-fangled way of shutting everything up tight," he declared. "When I lived in Centre Street, I used to read with the curtains up every night, and nobody ever shot me." He stood looking out at the starlight for a while, and turned and faced her again.

"I haven't seen much of you this summer, Victoria," he remarked.

"I'm sorry, father. You know I always like to walk with you every day you are here." He had aroused her sufficiently to have a distinct sense that this was not the time to refer to the warning she had given him that he was working too hard. But he was evidently bent on putting this construction on her answer.

"Several times I have asked for you, and you have been away," he said.

"If you had only let me know, I should have made it a point to be at home."

"How can I tell when these idiots will give me any rest?" he asked. He crushed the telegrams again, and came down the room and stopped in front of her. "Per-

haps there has been a particular reason why you have not been at home as much as usual."

"A particular reason?" she repeated, in genuine surprise.

"Yes," he said; "I have been hearing things which, to put it mildly, have astonished me."

"Hearing things?"

"Yes," he exclaimed. "I may be busy, I may be harassed by tricksters and bunglers, but I am not too busy not to care something about my daughter's doings. I expect them to deceive me, Victoria, but I pinned my faith somewhere. I pinned it on *you*. On *you*, do you understand?"

She raised her head for the first time and looked at him, with her lips quivering. But she did not speak.

"Ever since you were a child you have been everything to me, all I had to fly to. I was always sure of one genuine, disinterested love—and that was yours. I was always sure of hearing the truth from your lips."

"Father!" she cried.

He seemed not to hear the agonised appeal in her voice. Although he spoke in his usual tones, Augustus Flint was, in fact, beside himself.

"And now," he said, "and now I learn that you have been holding clandestine meetings with a man who is my enemy, with a man who has done me more harm than any other single individual, with a man whom I will not have in my house—do you understand? I can only say that before to-night, I gave him credit for having the decency not to enter it, not to sit down at my table."

Victoria turned away from him, and seized the high oak shelf of the mantel with both hands. He saw her shoulders rising and falling as her breath came deeply, spasmodically—like sobbing. But she was not sobbing as she turned

again and looked into his face. Fear was in her eye, and the high courage to look: fear and courage. She seemed to be looking at another man, at a man who was not her father. And Mr. Flint, despite his anger, vaguely interpreting her meaning, was taken aback. He had never seen anybody with such a look. And the unexpected quiet quality of her voice intensified his strange sensation.

"A Mr. Rangely, an Englishman, who is staying at the Leith Inn, was here to dinner to-night. He has never been here before."

"Austen Vane wasn't here to-night?"

"Mr. Vane has never been in this house to my knowledge but once, and you know more about that meeting than I do."

And still Victoria spoke quietly, inexplicably so to Mr. Flint—and to herself. It seemed to her that some other than she were answering with her voice, and that she alone felt. It was all a part of the nightmare, all unreal, and this was not her father; nevertheless, she suffered now, not from anger alone, nor sorrow, nor shame for him and for herself, nor disgust, nor a sense of injustice, nor cruelty—but all of these played upon a heart responsive to each with a different pain.

And Mr. Flint, halted for the moment by her look and manner, yet goaded on by a fiend of provocation which had for months been gathering strength, and which now mastered him completely, persisted. He knew not what he did or said.

"And you haven't seen him to-day, I suppose," he cried.

"Yes, I have seen him to-day."

"Ah, you have! I thought as much. Where did you meet him to-day?"

Victoria turned half away from him, raised a hand to the mantel-shelf again, and lifted a foot to the low brass fender as she looked down into the fire. The movement was not part of a desire to evade him, as he fancied in his anger, but rather one of profound indifference, of profound weariness—the sunless deeps of sorrow. And he thought her capable of deceiving him! He had been her constant companion from childhood, and knew only the visible semblance of her face, her form, her smile. Her sex was the sex of subterfuge.

"I went to the place where he is living, and asked for him," she said, "and he came out and spoke to me."

"You?" he repeated incredulously. There was surely no subterfuge in her tone, but an unreal, unbelievable note which his senses seized, and to which he clung. "You! My daughter!"

"Yes," she answered, "I, your daughter. I suppose you think I am shameless. It is true—I am."

Mr. Flint was utterly baffled. He was at sea. He had got beyond the range of his experience; defence, denial, tears, he could have understood and coped with. He crushed the telegrams into a tighter ball, sought for a footing, and found a precarious one.

"And all this has been going on without my knowledge, when you knew my sentiments towards the man?"

"Yes," she said. "I do not know what you include in that remark, but I have seen him many times—as many times, perhaps, as you have heard about."

He wheeled, and walked over to a cabinet between two of the great windows and stood there examining a collection of fans which his wife had bought at a famous sale in Paris. Had he suddenly been asked the question, he could not have said whether they were fans or beetles.

And it occurred to Victoria, as her eyes rested on his back, that she ought to be sorry for him—but wasn't, somehow. Perhaps she would be to-morrow. Mr. Flint looked at the fans, and an obscure glimmering of the truth came to him that instead of administering a severe rebuke to the daughter he believed he had known all his life, he was engaged in a contest with the soul of a woman he had never known. And the more she confessed, the more she apparently yielded, the more impotent he seemed, the tighter the demon gripped him. Obstacles, embarrassments, disappointments, he had met early in his life, and he had taken them as they came. There had followed a long period when his word had been law. And now, as age came on, and he was meeting with obstacles again, he had lost the magic gift of sweeping them aside; the growing certainty that he was becoming powerless haunted him night and day. Unbelievably strange, however, it was that the rays of his anger by some subconscious process had hovered from the first about the son of Hilary Vane, and were now, by the trend of event after event, firmly focussed there.

He left the cabinet abruptly and came back to Victoria. She was standing in the same position.

"You have spared me something," he said. "He has apparently undermined me with my own daughter. He has evidently given you an opinion of me which is his. I think I can understand why you have not spoken of these—meetings."

"It is an inference that I expected," said Victoria. Then she lifted her head and looked at him, and again he could not read her expression, for a light burned in her eyes that made them impenetrable to him,—a light that seemed pitilessly to search out and reveal the dark

places and the weak places within him which he himself had not known were there. Could there be another standard by which men and women were measured and judged?

Mr. Flint snapped his fingers, and turned and began to pace the room.

"It's all pretty clear," he said; "there's no use going into it any farther. You believe, with the rest of them, that I'm a criminal and deserve the penitentiary. I don't care a straw about the others," he cried, snapping his fingers again. "And I suppose, if I'd had any sense, I might have expected it from you, too, Victoria—though you are my daughter."

He was aware that her eyes followed him.

"How many times have you spoken with Austen Vane?" she asked.

"Once," he exclaimed; "that was enough. Once."

"And he gave you the impression," she continued slowly, "that he was deceitful, and dishonourable, and a coward? a man who would say things behind your back that he dared not say to your face? who desired reward for himself at any price, and in any manner? a man who would enter your house and seek out your daughter and secretly assail your character?"

Mr. Flint stopped in the middle of the floor.

"And you tell me he has not done these things?"

"Suppose I did tell you so," said Victoria, "would you believe me? I have no reason to think that you would. I am your daughter, I have been your most intimate companion, and I had the right to think that you should have formed some estimate of my character. Suppose I told you that Austen Vane has avoided me, that he would not utter a word against you or in favour of himself? Sup-

pose I told you that I, your daughter, thought there might be two sides to the political question that is agitating you, and wished in fairness to hear the other side,—as I intended to tell you when you were less busy? Suppose I told you that Austen Vane was the soul of honour, that he saw your side and presented it as ably as you have presented it? that he had refrained in many matters which might have been of advantage to him—although I did not hear of them from him—on account of his father? Would you believe me?”

“And suppose I told you,” cried Mr. Flint—so firmly fastened on him was the long habit of years of talking another down, “suppose I told you that this was the most astute and the craftiest course he could take? I’ve always credited him with brains. Suppose I told you that he was intriguing now, as he has been all along, to obtain the nomination for the governorship? Would you believe me?”

“No,” answered Victoria, quietly.

Mr. Flint went to the lamp, unrolled the ball of telegrams, seized one and crossed the room quickly, and held it out to her. His hand shook a little.

“Read that!” he said.

She read it: “*Estimate that more than half of delegates from this section pledged to Henderson will go to Austen Vane when signal is given in convention. Am told on credible authority same is true of other sections, including many of Hunt’s men and Crewe’s. This is the result of quiet but persistent political work I spoke about.*”

BILLINGS.”

She handed the telegram back to her father in silence.

“Do you believe it now?” he demanded exultantly.

"Who is the man whose name is signed to that message?" she asked.

Mr. Flint eyed her narrowly.

"What difference does that make?" he demanded.

"None," said Victoria. But a vision of Mr. Billings rose before her. He had been pointed out to her as the man who had opposed Austen in the Meader suit. "If the bishop of the diocese signed it, I would not believe that Austen Vane had anything to do with the matter."

"Ah, you defend him!" cried Mr. Flint. "I thought so—I thought so. I take off my hat to him, he is a cleverer man even than I. His own father, whom he has ruined, comes up here and defends him."

"Does Hilary Vane defend him?" Victoria asked curiously.

"Yes," said Mr. Flint, beside himself; "incredible as it may seem, he does. I have Austen Vane to thank for still another favour—he is responsible for Hilary's condition to-day. He has broken him down—he has made him an imbecile. The convention is scarcely thirty-six hours off, and Hilary is about as fit to handle it as—as Eben Fitch. Hilary, who never failed me in his life!"

Victoria did not speak for a moment, and then she reached out her hand quickly and laid it on his that still held the telegram. A lounge stood on one side of the fireplace, and she drew him gently to it, and he sat down at her side. His acquiescence to her was a second nature, and he was once more bewildered. His anger now seemed to have had no effect upon her whatever.

"I waited up to tell you about Hilary Vane, father," she said gently. "He has had a stroke, which I am afraid is serious."

"A stroke!" cried Mr. Flint. "Why didn't you tell me? How do you know?"

Victoria related how she had found Hilary coming away from Fairview, and what she had done, and the word Dr. Tredway had sent.

"Good God!" cried Mr. Flint, "he won't be able to go to the convention!" And he rose and pressed the electric button. "Towers," he said, when the butler appeared, "is Mr. Freeman still in my room? Tell him to telephone to Ripton at once and find out how Mr. Hilary Vane is. They'll have to send a messenger. That accounts for it," he went on, rather to himself than to Victoria, and he began to pace the room once more; "he looked like a sick man when he was here. And who have we got to put in his place? Not a soul!"

He paced awhile in silence. He appeared to have forgotten Victoria.

"Poor Hilary!" he said again, "poor Hilary! I'll go down there the first thing in the morning."

Another silence, and then Mr. Freeman, the secretary, entered.

"I telephoned to Dr. Tredway's, Mr. Flint. I thought that would be quickest. Mr. Vane has left home. They don't know where he's gone."

"Left home! It's impossible!" and he glanced at Victoria, who had risen to her feet. "There must be some mistake."

"No, sir. First I got the doctor, who said that Mr. Vane was gone—at the risk of his life. And then I talked to Mr. Austen Vane himself, who was there consulting with the doctor. It appears that Mr. Hilary Vane had left home by eight o'clock, when Mr. Austen Vane got there."

"Hilary's gone out of his head," exclaimed Mr. Flint. "This thing has unhinged him. Here, take these telegrams. No, wait a minute, I'll go out there. Call up Billings, and see if you can get Senator Whitredge."

He started out of the room, halted, and turned his head and hesitated.

"Father," said Victoria, "I don't think Hilary Vane is out of his mind."

"You don't?" he said quickly. "Why?"

By some unaccountable change in the atmosphere, of which Mr. Flint was unconscious, his normal relation to his daughter had been suddenly re-established. He was giving ear, as usual, to her judgment.

"Did Hilary Vane tell you he would go to the convention?" she asked.

"Yes." In spite of himself, he had given the word an apologetic inflection.

"Then he has gone already," she said. "I think, if you will telephone a little later to the State capital, you will find that he is in his room at the Pelican Hotel."

"By thunder, Victoria!" he ejaculated, "you may be right. It would be like him."

CHAPTER XII.

THE ARENA AND THE DUST.

ALAS! that the great genius who described the battle of Waterloo is not alive to-day and on this side of the Atlantic, for a subject worthy of his pen is at hand,—nothing less than that convention of conventions at which the Honourable Humphrey Crewe of Leith is one of the

candidates. One of the candidates, indeed! Will it not be known, as long as there are pensions, and a governor and a state-house and a seal and State sovereignty and a staff, as the *Crewe Convention*? How charge after charge was made during the long, hot day and into the night; how the delegates were carried out limp and speechless and starved and wet through, and carried in to vote again,—will all be told in time. But let us begin at the beginning, which is the day before.

But look! it is afternoon, and the candidates are arriving at the Pelican. The Honourable Adam B. Hunt is the first, and walks up the hill from the station escorted by such prominent figures as the Honourables Brush Bascom and Jacob Botcher, and surrounded by enthusiastic supporters who wear buttons with the image of their leader—goatee and all—and the singularly prophetic superscription, *To the Last Ditch*! Only veterans and experts like Mr. Bascom and Mr. Botcher can recognise the last ditch when they see it.

Another stir in the street—occasioned by the appearance of the Honourable Giles Henderson,—of the blameless life. Utter a syllable against him if you can! These words should be inscribed on his buttons if he had any—but he has none. They seem to be, unuttered, on the tongues of the gentlemen who escort the Honourable Giles, United States Senator Greene and the Honourable Elisha Jane, who has obtained leave of absence from his consular post to attend the convention,—and incidentally to help prepare for it.

But who and what is this? The warlike blast of a siren horn is heard, the crowd in the lobby rushes to the doors, people upstairs fly to the windows, and the Honourable Adam B. Hunt leans out and nearly falls out, but is

rescued by Division Superintendent Manning of the North-eastern Railroads, who has stepped in from Number Seven to give a little private tug of a persuasive nature to the Honourable Adam's coat-tails. A red Leviathan comes screaming down Main Street with a white trail of dust behind it, smothering the occupants of vehicles which have barely succeeded in getting out of the way, and makes a spectacular finish before the Pelican by sliding the last fifty feet on locked rear wheels.

A group in the street raises a cheer. It is the People's Champion! Dust coat, gauntlets, goggles, cannot hide him; and if they did, someone would recognise that voice, familiar now and endeared to many, and so suited to command:—

"Get that baggage off, and don't waste any time! Jump out, Watling—that handle turns the other way. Well, Tooting, are the headquarters ready? What was the matter that I couldn't get you on the telephone?" (To the crowd.) "Don't push in and scratch the paint. He's going to back out in a minute, and somebody'll get hurt."

Mr. Hamilton Tooting (Colonel Hamilton Tooting that is to be—it being an open secret that he is destined for the staff) is standing hatless on the sidewalk ready to receive the great man. The crowd in the rotunda makes a lane, and Mr. Crewe, glancing neither to the right nor left, walks upstairs; and scarce is he installed in the bridal suite, surrounded by his faithful workers for reform, than that amazing reception begins. Mr. Hamilton Tooting, looking the very soul of hospitality, stands by the doorway with an open box of cigars in his left hand, pressing them upon the visitors with his right. Reform, contrary to the preconceived opinion of many, is not made of icicles, nor

answers with a stone a request for bread. As the hours run on, the visitors grow more and more numerous, and after supper the room is packed to suffocation, and a long line is waiting in the corridor, marshalled and kept in good humour by able lieutenants; while Mr. Crewe is dimly to be perceived through clouds of incense burning in his honour—and incidentally at his expense—with a welcoming smile and an appropriate word for each caller, whose waistcoat pockets, when they emerge, resemble cartridge-belts of cigars.

More cigars were hastily sent for, and more. There are to be but a thousand delegates to the convention, and at least two thousand men have already passed through the room—and those who don't smoke have friends. It is well that Mr. Crewe has stuck to his conservative habit of not squeezing hands too hard.

"Isn't that Mr. Putter, who keeps a livery-stable here?" inquired Mr. Crewe, about nine o'clock—our candidate having a piercing eye of his own. Mr. Putter's coat, being brushed back, has revealed six cigars.

"Why, yes—yes," says Mr. Watling.

"Is he a delegate?" Mr. Crewe demanded.

"Why, I guess he must be," says Mr. Watling.

But Mr. Putter is not a delegate.

"You've stood up and made a grand fight, Mr. Crewe," says another gentleman, a little later, with a bland, smooth-shaven face and strong teeth to clinch Mr. Crewe's cigars. "I wish I was fixed so as I could vote for you."

Mr. Crewe looks at him narrowly.

"You look very much like a travelling man from New York who tried to sell me farm machinery," he answers. "Where are you from?"

"You ain't exactly what they call a tyro, are you?"

says the bland-faced man; "but I guess you've missed the mark this shot. Well, so long."

"Hold on!" says Mr. Crewe, "Watling will talk to you."

And, as the gentleman follows Mr. Watling through the press, a pamphlet drops from his pocket to the floor. It is marked *Catalogue of the Raines Farm Implement Company*. Mr. Watling picks it up and hands it to the gentleman, who winks again.

"Tim," he says, "where can we sit down? How much are you getting out of this? Brush and Jake Botcher are bidding high downstairs, and the quotation on delegates has gone up ten points in ten minutes. It's mighty good of you to remember old friends, Tim, even if they're not delegates."

Meanwhile Mr. Crewe is graciously receiving others who are crowding to him.

"How are you, Mr. Giddings? How are the cows? I carry some stock that'll make you sit up—I believe I told you when I was down your way. Of course, mine cost a little money, but that's one of my hobbies. Come and see 'em some day. There's a good hotel in Ripton, and I'll have you met there and drive you back."

Thus, with a genial and kindly remark to each, he passes from one to the other, and when the members of the press come to him for his estimate of the outcome on the morrow, he treats them with the same courtly consideration.

"Estimate!" cries Mr. Crewe. "Where have your eyes been to-night, my friends? Have you seen the people coming into these headquarters? Have you seen 'em pouring into any other headquarters? All the State and federal office-holders in the country couldn't stop me now. Estimate! I'll be nominated on the first ballot."

They wrote it down.

"Thank you, Mr. Crewe," they said; "that's the kind of talk we like to hear."

"And don't forget," said Mr. Crewe, "to mention this reception in the accounts."

Mr. Tooting, who makes it a point from time to time to reconnoitre, saunters halfway downstairs and surveys the crowded rotunda from the landing. Through the blue medium produced by the burning of many cigars (mostly Mr. Crewe's) he takes note of the burly form of Mr. Thomas Gaylord beside that of Mr. Redbrook and other rural figures; he takes note of a quiet corner with a ring of chairs surrounded by scouts and outposts, although it requires a trained eye such as Mr. Tooting's to recognise them as such—for they wear no uniforms. They are, in truth, minor captains of the feudal system, and their present duties consist (as Mr. Tooting sees clearly) in preventing the innocent and inquisitive from unprofitable speech with the Honourable Jacob Botcher, who sits in the inner angle conversing cordially with those who are singled out for this honour. Still other scouts conduct some of the gentlemen who have talked with Mr. Botcher up the stairs to a mysterious room on the second floor. Mr. Tooting discovers that the room is occupied by the Honourable Brush Bascom; Mr. Tooting learns with indignation that certain of these guests of Mr. Bascom's are delegates pledged to Mr. Crewe, whereupon he rushes back to the bridal suite to report to his chief. The cigars are giving out again, and the rush has slackened, and he detaches the People's Champion from the line and draws him to the inner room.

"Brush Bascom's conducting a bourse on the second floor and is running the price up right along," cried the

honest and indignant Mr. Tooting. "He's stringin' Adam Hunt all right. They say he's got Adam to cough up six thousand extra since five o'clock, but the question is—ain't he stringin' us? He paid six hundred for a block of ten not quarter of an hour ago—and nine of 'em were our delegates."

It must be remembered that these are Mr. Tooting's words, and Mr. Crewe evidently treated them as the product of that gentleman's vivid imagination. Translated, they meant that the Honourable Adam B. Hunt has no chance for the nomination, but that the crafty Messrs. Botcher and Bascom are inducing him to think that he has—by making a supreme effort. The supreme effort is represented by six thousand dollars.

"Are you going to lie down under that?" Mr. Tooting demanded, forgetting himself in his zeal for reform and Mr. Crewe. But Mr. Tooting, in some alarm, perceived the eye of his chief growing virtuous and glassy.

"I guess I know when *I'm* strung, as you call it, Mr. Tooting," he replied severely. "This cigar bill alone is enough to support a large family for several months."

And with this merited reproof he turned on his heel and went back to his admirers without, leaving Mr. Tooting aghast, but still resourceful. Ten minutes later that gentleman was engaged in a private conversation with his colleague, the Honourable Timothy Watling.

"He's up on his hind legs at last," said Mr. Tooting; "it looks as if he was catching on."

Mr. Watling evidently grasped these mysterious words, for he looked grave.

"He thinks he's got the nomination cinched, don't he?"

"That's the worst of it," cried Mr. Tooting.

"I'll see what I can do," said the Honourable Tim.

"He's always talking about *thorough*; let him do it thorough." And Mr. Watling winked.

"*Thorough*," repeated Mr. Tooting, delightedly.

"That's it—Colonel," said Mr. Watling. "Have you ordered your uniform yet, Ham?"

Mr. Tooting plainly appreciated this joke, for he grinned.

"I guess you won't starve if you don't get that commissionership, Tim," he retorted.

"And I guess," returned Mr. Watling, "that you won't go naked if you don't have a uniform."

Victoria's surmise was true. At ten o'clock at night, two days before the convention, a tall figure had appeared in the empty rotunda of the Pelican, startling the clerk out of a doze. He rubbed his eyes and stared, recognised Hilary Vane, and yet failed to recognise him. It was an extraordinary occasion indeed which would cause Mr. McAvoy to lose his aplomb; to neglect to seize the pen and dip it, with a flourish, into the ink, and extend its handle towards the important guest; to omit a few fitting words of welcome. It was Hilary who got the pen first, and wrote his name in silence, and by this time Mr. McAvoy had recovered his presence of mind sufficiently to wield the blotter.

"We didn't expect you to-night, Mr. Vane," he said, in a voice that sounded strange to him, "but we've kept Number Seven, as usual. Front!"

"The old man's seen his day, I guess," Mr. McAvoy remarked, as he studied the register with a lone reporter. "This Crewe must have got in on 'em hard, from what they tell me, and Adam Hunt has his dander up."

The next morning at ten o'clock, while the workmen

were still tacking down the fireproof carpets in headquarters upstairs, and before even the advance guard of the armies had begun to arrive, the eye of the clerk was caught by a tall young man rapidly approaching the desk.

"Is Mr. Hilary Vane here?"

"He's in Number Seven," said Mr. McAvoy, who was cudgelling his brains. "Give me your card, and I'll send it up."

"I'll go up," said the caller, turning on his heel and suiting the action to the word, leaving Mr. McAvoy to make active but futile inquiries among the few travelling men and reporters seated about.

"Well, if you fellers don't know him, I give up," said the clerk, irritably, "but he looks as if he ought to be somebody. He knows his business, anyway."

In the meantime Mr. Vane's caller had reached the first floor; he hesitated just a moment before knocking at the door of Number Seven, and the Honourable Hilary's voice responded. The door opened.

Hilary was seated, as usual, beside the marble-topped table, which was covered with newspapers and memoranda. In the room were Mr. Ridout, the capital lawyer, and Mr. Manning, the division superintendent. There was an instant of surprised silence on the part of the three, but the Honourable Hilary was the only one who remained expressionless.

"If you don't mind, gentlemen," said the visitor, "I should like to talk to my father for a few minutes."

"Why, certainly, Austen," Mr. Ridout replied, with an attempt at heartiness. Further words seemed to fail him, and he left the room somewhat awkwardly, followed by Mr. Manning; but the Honourable Hilary appeared to take no notice of this proceeding.

"Judge," said Austen, when the door had closed behind them, "I won't keep you long. I didn't come down here to plead with you to abandon what you believe to be your duty, because I know that would be useless. I have had a talk with Dr. Tredway," he added gently, "and I realise that you are risking your life. If I could take you back to Ripton I would, but I know that I cannot. I see your point of view, and if I were in your place I should do the same thing. I only wanted to tell you this—" Austen's voice caught a little, "if—anything should happen, I shall be at Mrs. Peasley's on Maple Street, opposite the Duncan house." He laid his hand for an instant, in the old familiar way, on Hilary's shoulder, and looked down into the older man's face. It may have been that Hilary's lips trembled a little. "I—I'll see you later, Judge, when it's all over. Good luck to you."

He turned slowly, went to the door and opened it, gave one glance at the motionless figure in the chair, and went out. He did not hear the voice that called his name, for the door had shut.

Mr. Ridout and Mr. Manning were talking together in low tones at the head of the stairs. It was the lawyer who accosted Austen.

"The old gentleman don't seem to be quite himself, Austen. Don't seem well. You ought to hold him in—he can't work as hard as he used to."

"I think you'll find, Mr. Ridout," answered Austen, deliberately, "that he'll perform what's required of him with his usual efficiency."

Mr. Ridout followed Austen's figure with his eyes until he was hidden by a turn of the stairs. Then he whistled.

"I can't make that fellow out," he exclaimed. "Never could. All I know is that if Hilary Vane pulls us through

this mess, in the shape he's in, it'll be a miracle. His mind seems sound enough to-day—but he's lost his grip, I tell you. I don't wonder Flint's beside himself. Here's Adam Hunt with both feet in the trough, and no more chance of the nomination than I have, and Bascom and Botcher teasing him on, and he's got enough votes with Crewe to lock up that convention for a dark horse. And who's the dark horse?"

Mr. Manning, who was a silent man, pointed with his thumb in the direction Austen had taken.

"Hilary Vane's own son," said Mr. Ridout, voicing the gesture; "they tell me that Tom Gaylord's done some pretty slick work. Now I leave it to you, Manning, if that isn't a mess!"

At this moment the conversation was interrupted by the appearance on the stairway of the impressive form of United States Senator Whitredge, followed by a hall boy carrying the senatorial gripsack. The senator's face wore a look of concern which could not possibly be misinterpreted.

"How's Hilary?" were his first words.

Mr. Ridout and Mr. Manning glanced at each other.

"He's in Number Seven; you'd better take a look at him, Senator."

The senator drew breath, directed that his grip be put in the room where he was to repose that night, produced an amber cigar-holder from a case, and a cigar from his waistcoat pocket.

"I thought I'd better come down early," he said; "things aren't going just as they should, and that's the truth. In fact," he added, significantly tapping his pocket, "I've got a letter from Mr. Flint to Hilary which I may have to use. You understand me."

"I guessed as much," said Mr. Ridout.

"Ahem! I saw young Vane going out of the hotel just now," the senator remarked. "I am told, on pretty good authority, that under certain circumstances, which I must confess seem not unlikely at present, he may be a candidate for the nomination. The fact that he is in town tends to make the circumstance more probable."

"He's just been in to see Hilary," said Mr. Ridout.

"You don't tell me!" said the senator, pausing as he lighted his cigar; "I was under the impression that—that they were not on speaking terms."

"They've evidently got together now," said Mr. Ridout. "I wonder how old Hilary *would* feel about it. *We* couldn't do much with Austen Vane if he was governor—that's a sure thing."

The senator pondered a moment.

"It's been badly managed," he muttered; "there's no doubt of that. Hunt *must* be got out of the way. When Bascom and Botcher come, tell them I want to see them in my room, not in Number Seven."

And with this impressive command, received with nods of understanding, Senator Whitredge advanced slowly towards Number Seven, knocked, and entered. Be it known that Mr. Flint, with characteristic caution, had not confided even to the senator that the Honourable Hilary had had a stroke.

"Ah, Vane," he said, in his most affable tones, "how are you?"

The Honourable Hilary, who was looking over some papers, shot at him a glance from under his shaggy eyebrows.

"Came in here to find out—didn't you, Whitredge?" he replied.

"What?" said the senator, taken aback, and for once at a loss for words.

The Honourable Hilary rose and stood straighter than usual, and looked the senator in the eye.

"What's your diagnosis?" he asked. "Superannuated—unfit for duty—unable to cope with the situation—ready to be superseded? Is that about it?"

To say that Senator Whitredge was startled and uncomfortable would be to put his case mildly. He had never before seen Mr. Vane in this mood.

"Ha-ha!" he laughed; "the years are coming over us a little, aren't they? But I guess it isn't quite time for the youngsters to step in yet."

"No, Whitredge," said Mr. Vane, slowly, without taking his eye from the senator's, "and it won't be until this convention is over. Do you understand?"

"That's the first good news I've heard this morning," said the senator, with the uneasy feeling that, in some miraculous way, the Honourable Hilary had read the superseding orders from highest authority through his pocket.

"You may take it as good news or bad news, as you please, but it's a fact. And now I want you to tell Ridout that I wish to see him again, and to bring in Doby, who is to be chairman of the convention."

"Certainly," assented the senator, with alacrity, as he started for the door. Then he turned. "I'm glad to see you're all right, Vane," he added; "I'd heard that you were a little under the weather—a bilious attack on account of the heat—that's all I meant." He did not wait for an answer, nor would he have got one. And he found Mr. Ridout in the hall.

"Well?" said the lawyer, expectantly, and looking with some curiosity at the senator's face.

"Well," said Mr. Whitredge, with marked impatience, "he wants to see you right away."

All day long Hilary Vane held conference in Number Seven, and at six o'clock sent a request that the Honourable Adam visit him. The Honourable Adam would not come; and the fact leaked out—through the Honourable Adam.

"He's mad clean through," reported the Honourable Elisha Jane, to whose tact and diplomacy the mission had been confided. "He said he would teach Flint a lesson. He'd show him he couldn't throw away a man as useful and efficient as he'd been, like a sucked orange."

"Humph! A sucked orange. That's what he said, is it? A sucked orange," Hilary repeated.

"That's what he said," declared Mr. Jane, and remembered afterwards how Hilary had been struck by the simile.

At ten o'clock at night, at the very height of the tumult, Senator Whitredge had received an interrogatory telegram from Fairview, and had called a private conference (in which Hilary was not included) in a back room on the second floor (where the conflicting bands of Mr. Crewe and Mr. Hunt could not be heard), which Mr. Manning and Mr. Jane and State Senator Billings and Mr. Ridout attended. Query: the Honourable Hilary had quarrelled with Mr. Flint, that was an open secret; did not Mr. Vane think himself justified, from his own point of view, in taking a singular revenge in not overexerting himself to pull the Honourable Adam out, thereby leaving the field open for his son, Austen Vane, with whom he was apparently reconciled? Not that Mr. Flint had hinted of such a thing! He had, in the telegram, merely urged the senator himself to see Mr. Hunt, and to make one

more attempt to restrain the loyalty to that candidate of Messrs. Bascom and Botcher.

The senator made the attempt, and failed signally.

It was half-past midnight by the shining face of the clock on the tower of the state-house, and hope flamed high in the bosom of the Honourable Adam B. Hunt—a tribute to the bellows-like skill of Messrs. Bascom and Botcher. The bands in the street had blown themselves out, the delegates were at last seeking rest, the hall boys in the corridors were turning down the lights, and the Honourable Adam, in a complacent and even jubilant frame of mind, had put on his carpet slippers and taken off his coat, when there came a knock at his door. He was not a little amazed and embarrassed, upon opening it, to see the Honourable Hilary. But these feelings gave place almost immediately to a sense of triumph; gone were the days when he had to report to Number Seven. Number Seven, in the person of Hilary (who *was* Number Seven), had been forced to come to him!

"Well, upon my soul!" he exclaimed heartily. "Come in, Hilary."

He turned up the jets of the chandelier, and gazed at his friend, and was silent.

"Have a seat, Hilary," he said, pushing up an arm-chair.

Mr. Vane sat down. Mr. Hunt took a seat opposite, and waited for his visitor to speak. He himself seemed to find no words.

"Adam," said Mr. Vane, at length, "we've known each other for a good many years."

"That's so, Hilary. That's so," Mr. Hunt eagerly assented. What was coming?

"And whatever harm I've done in my life," Hilary

continued, "I've always tried to keep my word. I told you, when we met up there by the mill this summer, that if Mr. Flint had consulted me about your candidacy, before seeing you in New York, I shouldn't have advised it—this time."

The Honourable Adam's face stiffened.

"That's what you said. But—"

"And I meant it," Mr. Vane interrupted. "I was never pledged to your candidacy, as a citizen. I've been thinking over my situation some, this summer, and I'll tell you in so many plain words what it is. I guess you know—I guess everybody knows who's thought about it. I deceived myself for a long time by believing that I earned my living as the attorney for the Northeastern Railroads. I've drawn up some pretty good papers for them, and I've won some pretty difficult suits. I'm not proud of 'em all, but let that go. Do you know what I am?"

The Honourable Adam was capable only of a startled ejaculation. Was Hilary Vane in his right senses?

"I'm merely their paid political tool," Mr. Vane continued, in the same tone. "I've sold them my brain, and my right of opinion as a citizen. I wanted to make this clear to you first of all. Not that you didn't know it, but I wished you to know that I know it. When Mr. Flint said that you were to be the Republican nominee, my business was to work to get you elected, which I did. And when it became apparent that you couldn't be nominated—"

"Hold on!" cried the Honourable Adam.

"Please wait until I have finished. When it became apparent that you couldn't be nominated, Mr. Flint sent me to try to get you to withdraw, and he decreed that

the new candidate should pay your expenses up to date. I failed in that mission."

"I don't blame you, Hilary," exclaimed Mr. Hunt. "I told you so at the time. But I guess I'll soon be in a position where I can make Flint walk the tracks—his own tracks."

"Adam," said Mr. Vane, "it is because I deserve as much of the blame as Mr. Flint that I am here."

Again Mr. Hunt was speechless. The Honourable Hilary Vane in an apologetic mood! A surmise flashed into the brain of the Honourable Adam, and sparkled there. The Honourable Giles Henderson was prepared to withdraw, and Hilary had come, by authority, to see if he would pay the Honourable Giles' campaign expenses. Well, he could snap his fingers at that.

"Flint has treated me like a dog," he declared.

"Mr. Flint never pretended," answered Mr. Vane, coldly, "that the nomination and election of a governor was anything but a business transaction. His regard for you is probably unchanged, but the interests he has at stake are too large to admit of sentiment as a factor."

"Exactly," exclaimed Mr. Hunt. "And I hear he hasn't treated you just right, Hilary. I understand—"

Hilary's eyes flashed for the first time.

"Never mind that, Adam," he said quietly; "I've been treated as I deserve. I have nothing whatever to complain of from Mr. Flint. I will tell you why I came here to-night. I haven't felt right about you since that interview, and the situation to-night is practically what it was then. You can't be nominated."

"Can't be nominated!" gasped Mr. Hunt. And he reached to the table for his figures. "I'll have four hundred on the first ballot, and I've got two hundred and

fifty more pledged to me as second choice. If you've come up here at this time of night to try to deceive me on that, you might as well go back and wire Flint it's no use. Why, I can name the delegates, if you'll listen."

Mr. Vane shook his head sadly. And, confident as he was, the movement sent a cold chill down the Honourable Adam's spine, for faith in Mr. Vane's judgment had become almost a second nature. He had to force himself to remember that this was not the old Hilary.

"You won't have three hundred, Adam, at any time," answered Mr. Vane. "Once you used to believe what I said, and if you won't now, you won't. But I can't go away without telling you what I came for."

"What's that?" demanded Mr. Hunt, wonderingly.

"It's this," replied Hilary, with more force than he had yet shown. "You can't get that nomination. If you'll let me know what your campaign expenses have been up to date,—all of 'em, you understand, to-night too,—I'll give you a check for them within the next two weeks."

"Who makes this offer?" demanded Mr. Hunt, with more curiosity than alarm; "Mr. Flint?"

"No," said Hilary; "Mr. Flint does not use the road's funds for such purposes."

"Henderson?"

"No," said Hilary; "I can't see what difference it makes to you."

The Honourable Adam had an eminently human side, and he laid his hand on Mr. Vane's knee.

"I think I've got a notion as to where that money would come from, Hilary," he said. "I'm much obliged to you, my friend. I wouldn't take it even if I thought you'd sized up the situation right. But—I don't agree with you this time. I know I've got the nomination. And I want to

say once more, that I think you're a square man, and I don't hold anything against you."

Mr. Vane rose.

"I'm sorry, Adam," he said; "my offer holds good—after to-morrow."

"After to-morrow!"

"Yes," said the Honourable Hilary. "I don't feel right about this thing. Er—good night, Adam."

"Hold on!" cried Mr. Hunt, as a new phase of the matter struck him. "Why, if I got out—"

"What then?" said Mr. Vane, turning around.

"Oh, I won't get out," said Mr. Hunt, "but if I did, —why, there wouldn't, according to your way of thinking, be any chance for a dark horse."

"What do you mean?" demanded Mr. Vane.

"Now don't get mad, Hilary. I guess, and you know, that Flint hasn't treated you decently this summer after all you've done for him, and I admire the way you're standing by him. I wouldn't do it. I just wanted to say," Mr. Hunt added slowly, "that I respect you all the more for trying to get me out. If—always according to your notion of the convention—if I don't get out, and haven't any chance, they tell me on pretty good authority Austen Vane will get the nomination."

Hilary Vane walked to the door, opened it and went out, and slammed it behind him.

* * * *

It is morning,—a hot morning, as so many recall,—and the partisans of the three leaders are early astir, and at seven-thirty Mr. Tooting discovers something going on briskly which he terms "dealing in futures." My vote is yours as long as you are in the race, but after that I have something negotiable. The Honourable Adam Hunt

strolls into the rotunda after an early breakfast, with a toothpick in his mouth, and is pointed out by the sophisticated to new arrivals as the man who spent seven thousand dollars over night, much of which is said to have stuck in the pockets of two feudal chiefs who could be named. Is it possible that there is a split in the feudal system at last? that the two feudal chiefs (who could be named) are rebels against highest authority? A smile from the sophisticated one. This duke and baron have merely stopped to pluck a bird; it matters not whether or not the bird is an erstwhile friend—he has been outlawed by highest authority, and is fair game. The bird (with the toothpick in his mouth) creates a smile from other chiefs of the system in good standing who are not too busy to look at him. They have ceased all attempts to buttonhole him, for he is unapproachable.

The other bird, the rebel of Leith, who has never been in the feudal system at all, they have stopped laughing at. It is he who has brought the Empire to its most precarious state.

And now, while strangers from near and far throng into town, drawn by the sensational struggle which is to culminate in battle to-day, Mr. Crewe is marshalling his forces. All the delegates who can be collected, and who wear the button with the likeness and superscription of Humphrey Crewe, are drawn up beside the monument in the park, where the Ripton Band is stationed; and presently they are seen by cheering crowds marching to martial music towards the convention hall, where they collect in a body, with signs and streamers in praise of the People's Champion well to the front and centre. This is generally regarded as a piece of consummate generalship on the part of their leader. They are applauded from

the galleries,—already packed,—especially from one conspicuous end where sit that company of ladies (now so famed) whose efforts have so materially aided the cause of the People's Champion. Gay streamers vie with gayer gowns, and morning papers on the morrow will have something to say about the fashionable element and the special car which brought them from Leith.

My, but it is hot!

The hall is filled now, with the thousand delegates, or their representatives who are fortunate enough to possess their credentials. Something of this matter later. General Doby, chairman of the convention, an impressive but mournful figure, could not call a roll if he wanted to. Not that he will want to! Impossible to tell, by the convenient laws of the State, whether the duly elected delegates of Hull or Mercer or Truro are here or not, since their credentials may be bought or sold or conferred. Some political giants, who have not negotiated their credentials, are recognised as they walk down the aisle: the statesmanlike figure of Senator Whitredge (a cheer); that of Senator Green (not so statesmanlike, but a cheer); Congressman Fairplay (cheers); and—Hilary Vane! His a figure that does not inspire cheers,—least of all to-day,—the man upon whose shoulders rests the political future of the Northeastern. The conservative Mr. Tredways and other Lincoln radicals of long ago who rely on his strength and judgment are not the sort to cheer. And yet—and yet Hilary inspires some feeling when, with stooping gait, he traverses the hall, and there is a hush in many quarters as delegates and spectators watch his progress to the little room off the platform: the general's room, as the initiated know.

Ah, but few know what a hateful place it is to Hilary

Vane to-day, this keyboard at which he has sat so complacently in years gone by, the envied of conventions. He sits down wearily at the basswood table, and scarcely hears the familiar sounds without, which indicate that the convention of conventions has begun. Extraordinary phenomenon at such a time, scenes of long ago and little cherished then, are stealing into his mind.

The Reverend Mr. Crane (so often chaplain of the Legislature, and known to the irreverent as the chaplain of the Northeastern) is praying now for guidance in the counsels of this great gathering of the people's representatives. God will hear Mr. Botcher better if he closes his eyes; which he does. Now the platform is being read by State Senator Billings; closed eyes would best suit this proceeding, too. As a parallel to that platform, one can think only of the Ten Commandments. *The Republican Party (chosen children of Israel) must be kept free from the domination of corporations.* (Cheers and banner waving for a full minute.) *Some better method of choosing delegates which will more truly reflect the will of the people.* (Plank of the Honourable Jacob Botcher, whose conscience is awakening.) Never mind the rest. It is a triumph for Mr. Crewe, and is all printed in that orthodox (reform!) newspaper, the *State Tribune*, with urgent editorials that it must be carried out to the letter.

And what now? Delegates, credential holders, audience, and the Reverend Mr. Crane draw long breaths of heated carbon dioxide. Postmaster Burrows of Edmundton, in rounded periods, is putting in nomination his distinguished neighbour and fellow-citizen, the Honourable Adam B. Hunt, who can subscribe and say *amen* to every plank in that platform. He believes it, he has proclaimed it in public, and he embodies it. Mr. Burrows indulges in

slight but effective sarcasm of sham reformers and so-called business men who perform the arduous task of cutting coupons and live in rarefied regions where they can only be seen by the common people when the light is turned on. (Cheers from two partisan bodies and groans and hisses from another. General Doby, with a pained face, pounding with the gavel. This isn't a circumstance to what's coming, General.)

After General Doby has succeeded in abating the noise in honour of the Honourable Adam, there is a hush of expectancy. Humphrey Crewe, who has made all this trouble and enthusiasm, is to be nominated next, and the Honourable Timothy Watling of Newcastle arises to make that celebrated oration which the cynical have called the "thousand-dollar speech." And even if they had named it well (which is not for a moment to be admitted!), it is cheap for the price. How Mr. Crewe's ears must tingle as he paces his headquarters in the Pelican! Almost would it be sacrilege to set down cold, on paper, the words that come, burning, out of the Honourable Timothy's loyal heart. Here, gentlemen, is a man at last, not a mere puppet who signs his name when a citizen of New York pulls the string; one who is prepared to make any sacrifice,—to spend his life, if need be, in their service. (A barely audible voice, before the cheering commences, "I guess that's so.") Humphrey Crewe needs no defence—the Honourable Timothy avers—at his hands, or anyone's. Not merely an idealist, but a practical man who has studied the needs of the State; unselfish to the core; longing, like Washington, the Father of his Country, to remain in a beautiful country home, where he dispenses hospitality with a flowing hand to poor and rich alike, yet harking to the call of duty. Leaving, like the noble

Roman of old, his plough in the furrow— (Same voice as before, "I wish he'd left his automo'bil' thar!") Hisses and laughter.) The Honourable Timothy, undaunted, snatches his hand from the breast of his Prince Albert and flings it, with a superb gesture, towards the Pelican. "Gentlemen, I have the honour to nominate to this convention that peerless leader for the right, the Honourable Humphrey Crewe of Leith—our next governor."

General Andrew Jackson himself, had he been alive and on this historic ground and chairman of that convention, could scarce have quelled the tumult aroused by this name and this speech—much less General Doby. Although a man of presence, measurable by scales with weights enough, our general has no more ponderosity now than a leaf in a mountain storm at Hale—and no more control over the hurricane. Behold him now, pounding with his gavel on something which should give forth a sound, but doesn't. Who is he (to change the speech's figure—not the general's), who is he to drive a wild eight-horse team, who is fit only to conduct Mr. Flint's oxen in years gone by?

It is a memorable scene, sketched to life for the metropolitan press. The man on the chair, his face lighted by a fanatic enthusiasm, is the Honourable Hamilton Tooting, coatless and collarless, leading the cheers that shake the building, that must have struck terror to the soul of Augustus P. Flint himself—fifty miles away. But the endurance of the human throat is limited.

Why, in the name of political strategy, has United States Senator Greene been chosen to nominate the Honourable Giles Henderson of Kingston? Some say that it is the will of highest authority, others that the sen-

ator is a close friend of the Honourable Giles—buys his coal from him, wholesale. Both surmises are true. The senator's figure is not impressive, his voice less so, and he reads from manuscript, to the accompaniment of continual cries of "Louder!" A hook for Leviathan! "A great deal of dribble," said the senator, for little rocks sometimes strike fire, "has been heard about the 'will of the people.' The Honourable Giles Henderson is beholden to no man and to no corporation, and will go into office prepared to do justice impartially to all."

But—*copia verborum*—let us to the main business!

To an hundred newspapers, to Mr. Flint at Fairview, and other important personages ticks out the momentous news that the balloting has begun. No use trying to hold your breath until the first ballot is announced; it takes time to obtain the votes of one thousand men—especially when neither General Doby nor anyone else knows who they are! The only way is to march up on the stage by counties and file past the ballot-box. Putnam, with their glitter-eyed duke, Mr. Bascom, at their head—presumably solid for Adam B. Hunt; Baron Burrows, who farms out the post-office at Edmundton, leads Edmunds County; Earl Elisha Jane, consul at some hot place where he spends the inclement months, drops the first ticket for Haines County, ostensibly solid for home-made virtue and the Honourable Giles.

An hour and a quarter of suspense and torture passes, while collars wilt and coats come off, and fans in the gallery wave incessantly, and excited conversation buzzes in every quarter. And now, see! there is whispering on the stage among the big-bugs. Mr. Chairman Doby rises with a paper in his hand, and the buzzing dies down to silence.

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| The Honourable Giles Henderson of Kingston has . . | 398 |
| The Honourable Humphrey Crewe of Leith has . . | 353 |
| The Honourable Adam B. Hunt of Edmundton has . | 249 |

And a majority being required, there is no choice!

Are the supporters of the People's Champion crest-fallen, think you? Mr. Tooting is not leading them for the moment, but is pressing through the crowd outside the hall and flying up the street to the Pelican and the bridal suite, where he is first with the news. Note for an unabridged biography: the great man is discovered sitting quietly by the window, poring over a book on the modern science of road-building, some notes from which he is making for his first message. And instead of the reek of tobacco smoke, the room is filled with the scent of the floral tributes brought down by the Ladies' Auxiliary from Leith. In Mr. Crewe's right-hand pocket, neatly typewritten, is his speech of acceptance. He is never caught unprepared. Unkind, now, to remind him of that prediction made last night about the first ballot to the newspapers—and useless.

"I told you last night they were buyin' 'em right under our noses," cried Mr. Tooting, in a paroxysm of indignation, "and you wouldn't believe me. They got over one hundred and sixty away from us."

"It strikes me, Mr. Tooting," said Mr. Crewe, "that it was your business to prevent that."

There will no doubt be a discussion, when the biographer reaches this juncture, concerning the congruity of reform delegates who can be bought. It is too knotty a point of ethics to be dwelt upon here.

"Prevent it!" echoed Mr. Tooting, and in the strong light of the righteousness of that eye reproaches failed him. "But there's a whole lot of 'em can be seen, right

now, while the ballots are being taken. It won't be decided on the next ballot."

"Mr. Tooting," said Mr. Crewe, indubitably proving that he had the qualities of a leader—if such proof were necessary, "go back to the convention. I have no doubt of the outcome, but that doesn't mean you are to relax your efforts. Do you understand?"

"I guess I do," replied Mr. Tooting, and was gone. "He still has his flag up," he whispered into the Honourable Timothy Watling's ear, when he reached the hall. "He'll stand a little more yet."

Mr. Tooting, at times, speaks a language unknown to us—and the second ballot is going on. And during its progress the two principal lieutenants of the People's Champion were observed going about the hall apparently exchanging the time of day with various holders of credentials. Mr. Jane, too, is going about the hall, and Postmaster Burrows, and Postmaster Bill Fleming of Brampton, and the Honourable Nat Billings, and Messrs. Bascom and Botcher, and Mr. Manning, division superintendent, and the Honourable Orrin Young, railroad commissioner and candidate for reappointment—all are embracing the opportunity to greet humble friends or to make new acquaintances. Another hour and a quarter, with the temperature steadily rising and the carbon dioxide increasing—and the second ballot is announced.

The Honourable Giles Henderson of Kingston has . . . 440

The Honourable Humphrey Crewe of Leith has . . . 336

The Honourable Adam B. Hunt of Edmundton has . . . 255

And there are three votes besides improperly made out!

What the newspapers call indescribable excitement ensues. The three votes improperly made out are said to be trip passes accidentally dropped into the box by the

supporters of the Honourable Elisha Jane. And add up the sum total of the votes! *Thirty-one votes more than there are credentials in the hall!* Mystery of mysteries—how can it be? The ballot, announces General Doby, after endless rapping, is a blank. Cheers, recriminations, exultation, disgust of decent citizens, attempts by twenty men to get the eye of the president (which is too watery to see any of them), and rushes for the platform to suggest remedies or ask what is going to be done about such palpable fraud. What can be done? Call the roll! How in blazes can you call the roll when you don't know who's here? Messrs. Jane, Botcher, Bascom, and Fleming are not disturbed, and improve their time. Watling and Tooting rush to the bridal suite, and rush back again to demand justice. General Doby mingles his tears with theirs, and somebody calls him a jellyfish. He does not resent it. Friction makes the air hotter and hotter—Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego would scarce enter into this furnace,—and General Doby has a large damp spot on his back as he pounds and pounds and pounds until we are off again on the third ballot. No dinner, and three-thirty P.M.! Two delegates have fainted, but the essential parts of them—the credentials—are left behind.

Four-forty, whispering again, and the gavel drops.

The Honourable Giles Henderson of Kingston has . . . 412

The Honourable Humphrey Crewe of Leith has . . . 325

The Honourable Adam B. Hunt of Edmundton has . . . 250

And there is no choice on the third ballot!

Thirteen delegates are actually missing this time. Scour the town! And now even the newspaper adjectives describing the scene have given out. A persistent and terrifying rumour goes the rounds,—where's Tom Gaylord? Somebody said he was in the hall a moment ago, on a

Ripton credential. If so, he's gone out again—gone out to consult the dark horse, who is in town, somewhere. Another ominous sign: Mr. Redbrook, Mr. Widgeon of Hull, and the other rural delegates who have been voting for the People's Champion, and who have not been observed in friendly conversation with anybody at all, now have their heads together. Mr. Billings goes sauntering by, but cannot hear what they are saying. Something must be done, and right away, and the knowing metropolitan reporters are winking at each other and declaring darkly that a sensation is about to turn up.

Where is Hilary Vane? Doesn't he realise the danger? Or—traitorous thought!—doesn't he care? To see his son nominated would be a singular revenge for the indignities which are said to have been heaped upon him. Does Hilary Vane, the strong man of the State, merely sit at the keyboard, powerless, while the tempest itself shakes from the organ a new and terrible music? Nearly six hours he has sat at the basswood table, while senators, congressmen, feudal chiefs, and even Chairman Doby himself flit in and out, whisper in his ear, set papers before him, and figures and problems, and telegrams from highest authority. He merely nods his head, says a word now and then, or holds his peace. Does he know what he's about? If they had not heard things concerning his health,—and other things,—they would still feel safe. He seems the only calm man to be found in the hall—but is the calm aberration?

A conference in the corner of the platform, while the fourth ballot is progressing, is held between Senators Whitredge and Greene, Mr. Ridout and Mr. Manning. So far the Honourable Hilary has apparently done nothing but let the storm take its course; a wing-footed messenger

has returned who has seen Mr. Thomas Gaylord walking rapidly up Maple Street, and Austen Vane (most astute and reprehensible of politicians) is said to be at the Widow Peasley's, quietly awaiting the call. The name of Austen Vane—another messenger says—is running like wildfire through the hall, from row to row. Mr. Crewe has no chance—so rumour goes. A reformer (to pervert the saying of a celebrated contemporary humorist) must fight Marquis of Queensberry to win; and the People's Champion, it is averred, has not. Shrewd country delegates who had listened to the Champion's speeches and had come to the capital prepared to vote for purity, had been observing the movements since yesterday of Mr. Tooting and Mr. Watling with no inconsiderable interest. Now was the psychological moment for Austen Vane, but who was to beard Hilary?

No champion was found, and the Empire, the fate of which was in the hands of a madman, was cracking. Let an individual of character and known anti-railroad convictions (such as the gentleman said to be at the Widow Peasley's) be presented to the convention, and they would nominate him. Were Messrs. Bascom and Botcher going to act the part of Samsons? Were they working for revenge and a new *régime*? Mr. Whitredge started for the Pelican, not at his ordinary senatorial gait, to get Mr. Flint on the telephone.

The result of the fourth ballot was announced, and bedlam broke loose.

The Honourable Giles Henderson of Kingston has . . . 419

The Honourable Humphrey Crewe of Leith has . . . 337

The Honourable Adam B. Hunt of Edmundton has . . . 256

Total, one thousand and eleven out of a thousand!
Two delegates abstained from voting, and proclaimed the

fact, but were heard only a few feet away. Other delegates, whose flesh and blood could stand the atmosphere no longer, were known to have left the hall! Aha! the secret is out, if anybody could hear it. At the end of every ballot several individuals emerge and mix with the crowd in the street. Astute men sometimes make mistakes, and the following conversation occurs between one of the individuals in question and Mr. Crewe's chauffeur.

Individual: Do you want to come in and see the convention and vote?

Chauffeur: I am Frenchman.

Individual: That doesn't cut any ice. I'll make out the ballot, and all you'll have to do is to drop it in the box.

Chauffeur: All right; I vote for Meester Crewe.

Sudden disappearance of the individual.

Nor is this all. The Duke of Putnam, for example, knows how many credentials there are in his county—say, seventy-six. He counts the men present and voting, and his result is sixty-one. Fifteen are absent, getting food or—something else. Fifteen vote over again. But, as the human brain is prone to error, and there are men in the street, the Duke miscalculates; the Earl of Haines miscalculates, too. Result—eleven over a thousand votes, and some nine hundred men in the hall!

How are you going to stop it? Mr. Watling climbs up on the platform and shakes his fist in General Doby's face, and General Doby tearfully appeals for an honest ballot—to the winds.

In the meantime the Honourable Elisha Jane, spurred on by desperation and thoughts of a *dolce far niente* gone forever, has sought and cornered Mr. Bascom.

"For God's sake, Brush," cries the Honourable Elisha,

"hasn't this thing gone far enough? A little of it is all right—the boys understand that; but have you thought what it means to you and me if these blanked reformers get in,—if a feller like Austen Vane is nominated?"

That cold, hard glitter which we have seen was in Mr. Bascom's eyes.

"You fellers have got the colic," was the remark of the arch-rebel. "Do you think old Hilary doesn't know what he's about?"

"It looks that way to me," said Mr. Jane.

"It looks that way to Doby too, I guess," said Mr. Bascom, with a glance of contempt at the general; "he's lost about fifteen pounds to-day. Did Hilary send you down here?" he demanded.

"No," Mr. Jane confessed.

"Then go back and chase yourself around the platform some more," was Mr. Bascom's unfeeling advice, "and don't have a fit here. All the brains in this hall are in Hilary's room. When he's ready to talk business with me in behalf of the Honourable Giles Henderson, I guess he'll do so."

But fear had entered the heart of the Honourable Elisha, and there was a sickly feeling in the region of his stomach which even the strong medicine administered by the Honourable Brush failed to alleviate. He perceived Senator Whitredge, returned from the Pelican. But the advice—if any—the president of the Northeastern has given the senator is not forthcoming in practice. Mr. Flint, any more than Ulysses himself, cannot recall the tempests when his own followers have slit the bags—and in sight of Ithaca! Another conference at the back of the stage, out of which emerges State Senator Nat Billings and gets the ear of General Doby.

"Let 'em yell," says Mr. Billings—as though the general, by raising one adipose hand, could quell the storm. Eyes are straining, scouts are watching at the back of the hall and in the street, for the first glimpse of the dreaded figure of Mr. Thomas Gaylord. "Let 'em yell," counsels Mr. Billings, "and if they do nominate anybody nobody 'll hear 'em. And send word to Putnam County to come along on their fifth ballot."

It is Mr. Billings himself who sends word to Putnam County, in the name of the convention's chairman. Before the messenger can reach Putnam County another arrives on the stage, with wide pupils—"Tom Gaylord is coming!" This momentous news, Marconi-like, penetrates the storm, and is already on the floor. Mr. Widgeon and Mr. Redbrook are pushing their way towards the door. The conference, emboldened by terror, marches in a body into the little room, and surrounds the calmly insane Lieutenant-general of the forces; it would be ill-natured to say that visions of lost railroad commissionerships, lost consulships, lost postmasterships,—yes, of lost senatorships, were in these loyal heads at this crucial time.

It was all very well (so said the first spokesman) to pluck a few feathers from a bird so bountifully endowed as the Honourable Adam, but were not two gentlemen who should be nameless carrying the joke a little too far? Mr. Vane unquestionably realised what he was doing, but—was it not almost time to call in the two gentlemen and—and come to some understanding?

"Gentlemen," said the Honourable Hilary, apparently unmoved, "I have not seen Mr. Bascom or Mr. Botcher since the sixteenth day of August, and I do not intend to."

Some clearing of throats followed this ominous declaration,—and a painful silence. The thing must be said—

and who would say it? Senator Whitredge was the hero.

Mr. Thomas Gaylord has just entered the convention hall, and is said to be about to nominate—a dark horse. The moment was favourable, the convention demoralised, and at least one hundred delegates had left the hall. (How about the last ballot, Senator, which showed 1011?)

The Honourable Hilary rose abruptly, closed the door to shut out the noise, and turned and looked Mr. Whitredge in the eye.

"Who is the 'dark horse?'" he demanded.

The members of the conference coughed again, looked at each other, and there was a silence. For some inexplicable reason, nobody cared to mention the name of Austen Vane.

The Honourable Hilary pointed at the basswood table.

"Senator," he said, "I understand you have been telephoning Mr. Flint. Have you got orders to sit down there?"

"My dear sir," said the Senator, "you misunderstand me."

"Have you got orders to sit down there?" Mr. Vane repeated.

"No," answered the Senator; "Mr. Flint's confidence in you—"

The Honourable Hilary sat down again, and at that instant the door was suddenly flung open by Postmaster Bill Fleming of Brampton, his genial face aflame with excitement and streaming with perspiration. Forgotten, in this moment, is senatorial courtesy and respect for the powers of the feudal system.

"Say, boys," he cried, "Putnam County's voting, and there's be'n no nomination and ain't likely to be. Jim

Scudder, the station-master at Wye, is here on credentials, and he says for sure the thing's fizzled out, and Tom Gaylord's left the hall!"

Again a silence, save for the high hum let in through the open doorway. The members of the conference stared at the Honourable Hilary, who seemed to have forgotten their presence; for he had moved his chair to the window, and was gazing out over the roofs at the fast-fading red in the western sky.

An hour later, when the room was in darkness save for the bar of light that streamed in from the platform chandelier, Senator Whitredge entered.

"Hilary!" he said.

There was no answer. Mr. Whitredge felt in his pocket for a match, struck it, and lighted the single jet over the basswood table. Mr. Vane still sat by the window. The senator turned and closed the door, and read from a paper in his hand; so used was he to formality that he read it formally, yet with a feeling of intense relief, of deference, of apology.

"Fifth ballot:—

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| The Honourable Giles Henderson of Kingston has . . | 587 |
| The Honourable Adam B. Hunt of Edmundton has . . | 230 |
| The Honourable Humphrey Crewe of Leith has . . | 154 |

And Giles Henderson is nominated—Hilary?"

"Yes," said Mr. Vane.

"I don't think any of us were—quite ourselves to-day. It wasn't that we didn't believe in you—but we didn't have all the threads in our hands, and—for reasons which I think I can understand—you didn't take us into your confidence. I want to—"

The words died on the senator's lips. So absorbed

had he been in his momentous news, and solicitous over the result of his explanation, that his eye looked outward for the first time, and even then accidentally.

"Hilary!" he cried; "for God's sake, what's the matter? Are you sick?"

"Yes, Whitredge," said Mr. Vane, slowly, "sick at heart."

It was but natural that these extraordinary and incomprehensible words should have puzzled and frightened the senator more than ever.

"Your heart!" he repeated.

"Yes, my heart," said Hilary.

The senator reached for the ice-water on the table.

"Here," he cried, pouring out a glass, "it's only the heat—it's been a hard day—drink this."

But Hilary did not raise his arm. The door opened—others coming to congratulate Hilary Vane on the greatest victory he had ever won. Offices were secure once more, the feudal system intact, and rebels justly punished; others coming to make their peace with the commander whom, senseless as they were, they had dared to doubt.

They crowded past each other on the threshold, and stood grouped beyond the basswood table, staring—staring—men suddenly come upon a tragedy instead of a feast, the senator still holding the glass of water in a hand that trembled and spilled it. And it was the senator, after all, who first recovered his presence of mind. He set down the water, pushed his way through the group into the hall, where the tumult and the shouting died. Mr. Giles Henderson, escorted, is timidly making his way towards the platform to read his speech of acceptance of a willing bondage, when a voice rings out:—

"If there is a physician in the house, will he please come forward?"

And then a hush,—and then the buzz of comment. Back to the little room once more, where they are gathered speechless about Hilary Vane. And the doctor comes— young Dr. Tredway of Ripton, who is before all others.

"I expected this to happen, gentlemen," he said, "and I have been here all day, at the request of Mr. Vane's son, for this purpose."

"Austen!"

It was Hilary who spoke.

"I have sent for him," said the doctor. "And now, gentlemen, if you will kindly—"

They withdrew and the doctor shut the door. Outside, the Honourable Giles is telling them how seriously he regards the responsibility of the honour thrust upon him by a great party. But nobody hears him in the wild rumours that fly from mouth to mouth as the hall empties. Rushing in against the tide outpouring, tall, stern, vigorous, is a young man whom many recognise, whose name is on many lips as they make way for him, who might have saved them if he would. The door of the little room opens, and he stands before his father, looking down at him. And the stern expression is gone from his face.

"Austen!" said Mr. Vane.

"Yes, Judge."

"Take me away from here. Take me home—now—to-night."

Austen glanced at Dr. Tredway.

"It is best," said the doctor; "we will take him home—to-night."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE VOICE OF AN ERA.

THEY took him home, in the stateroom of the sleeper attached to the night express from the south, although Mr. Flint, by telephone, had put a special train at his disposal. The long service of Hilary Vane was over; he had won his last fight for the man he had chosen to call his master; and those who had fought behind him, whose places, whose very luminary existences, had depended on his skill, knew that the end had come; nay, were already speculating, manœuvring, and taking sides. Who would be the new Captain-general? Who would be strong enough to suppress the straining ambitions of the many that the Empire might continue to flourish in its integrity and gather tribute? It is the world-old cry around the palace walls: Long live the new ruler—if you can find him among the curdling factions.

They carried Hilary home that September night, when Sawanec was like a grey ghost-mountain facing the waning moon, back to the home of those strange, Renaissance Austens which he had reclaimed for a grim puritanism, and laid him in the carved and canopied bedstead Channing Austen had brought from Spain. Euphrasia had met them at the door, but a trained nurse from the Ripton hospital was likewise in waiting; and a New York specialist had been summoned to prolong, if possible, the life of one from whom all desire for life had passed.

Before sunrise a wind came from the northern spruces; the dawn was cloudless, fiery red, and the air had an autumn sharpness. At ten o'clock Dr. Harmon arrived, was met at the station by Austen, and spent half an hour with Dr. Tredway. At noon the examination was complete. Thanks to generations of self-denial by the Vanes of Camden Street, Mr. Hilary Vane might live indefinitely, might even recover, partially; but at present he was condemned to remain, with his memories, in the great canopied bed.

The Honourable Hilary had had another caller that morning besides Dr. Harmon,—no less a personage than the president of the Northeastern Railroads himself, who had driven down from Fairview immediately after breakfast. Austen having gone to the station, Dr. Tredway had received Mr. Flint in the darkened hall, and had promised to telephone to Fairview the verdict of the specialist. At present Dr. Tredway did not think it wise to inform Hilary of Mr. Flint's visit—not, at least, until after the examination.

Mr. Vane exhibited the same silent stoicism on receiving the verdict of Dr. Harmon as he had shown from the first. With the clew to Hilary's life which Dr. Tredway had given him, the New York physician understood the case; one common enough in his practice in a great city where the fittest survive—sometimes only to succumb to unexpected and irreparable blows in the evening of life.

On his return from seeing Dr. Harmon off Austen was met on the porch by Dr. Tredway.

"Your father has something on his mind," said the doctor, "and perhaps it is just as well that he should be relieved. He is asking for you, and I merely wished to

advise you to make the conversation as short as possible."

Austen climbed the stairs in obedience to this summons, and stood before his father at the bedside. Hilary lay back among the pillows, and the brightness of that autumn noonday only served to accentuate the pallor of his face, the ravages of age which had come with such incredible swiftness, and the outline of a once vigorous frame. The eyes alone shone with a strange new light, and Austen found it unexpectedly difficult to speak. He sat down on the bed and laid his hand on the helpless one that rested on the coverlet.

"Austen," said Mr. Vane, "I want you to go to Fairview." His son's hand tightened over his own.

"Yes, Judge."

"I want you to go now."

"Yes, Judge."

"You know the combination of my safe at the office. It's never been changed since—since you were there. Open it. You will find two tin boxes, containing papers labelled Augustus P. Flint. I want you to take them to Fairview and put them into the hands of Mr. Flint himself. I—I cannot trust anyone else. I promised to take them myself, but—Flint will understand."

"I'll go right away," said Austen, rising, and trying to speak cheerfully. "Mr. Flint was here early this morning—inquiring for you."

Hilary Vane's lips trembled, and another expression came into his eyes.

"Rode down to look at the scrap-heap,—did he?"

Austen strove to conceal his surprise at his father's words and change of manner.

"Tredway saw him," he said. "I'm pretty sure Mr.

Flint doesn't feel that way, Judge. He has taken your illness very much to heart, I know, and he left some fruit and flowers for you."

"I guess his daughter sent those," said Hilary.

"His daughter!" Austen repeated.

"If I didn't think so," Mr. Vane continued, "I'd send 'em back. I never knew what she was until she picked me up and drove me down here. I've always done Victoria an injustice."

Austen walked to the door, and turned slowly.

"I'll go at once, Judge," he said.

In the kitchen he was confronted by Euphrasia.

"When is that woman going away?" she demanded.

"I've took care of Hilary Vane nigh on to forty years, and I guess I know as much about nursing, and more about Hilary, than that young thing with her cap and apron. I told Dr. Tredway so. She even came down here to let me know what to cook for him, and I sent her about her business.

Austen smiled. It was the first sign, since his return the night before, Euphrasia had given that an affection for Hilary Vane lurked beneath the burr of that strange nature.

"She won't stay long, Phrasie," he answered, and added mischievously, "for a very good reason."

"And what's that?" asked Euphrasia.

"Because you won't allow her to. I have a notion that she'll pack up and leave in about three days, and that all the doctors in Ripton couldn't keep her here."

"Get along with you," said Euphrasia, who could not for the life of her help looking a little pleased.

"I'm going off for a few hours," he said more seriously. "Dr. Tredway tells me they do not look for any developments—for the worse."

"Where are you going?" asked Euphrasia, sharply.

"To Fairview," he said.

Euphrasia moved the kettle to another part of the stove.

"You'll see *her*?" she said.

"Who?" Austen asked. But his voice must have betrayed him a little, for Euphrasia turned and seized him by the elbows and looked up into his face.

"Victoria," she said.

He felt himself tremble at the name,—at the strangeness of its sound on Euphrasia's lips.

"I do not expect to see Miss Flint," he answered, controlling himself as well as he was able. "I have an errand for the Judge with Mr. Flint himself."

Euphrasia had guessed his secret! But how?

"Hadn't you better see her?" said Euphrasia, in a curious monotone.

"But I have no errand with her," he objected, mystified yet excited by Euphrasia's manner.

"She fetched Hilary home," said Euphrasia.

"Yes."

"She couldn't have be'n kinder if she was his own daughter."

"I know—" he began, but Euphrasia interrupted.

"She sent that Englishman for the doctor, and waited to take the news to her father, and she came out in this kitchen and talked to me."

Austen started. Euphrasia was not looking at him now, and suddenly she dropped his arms and went to the window overlooking the garden.

"She wouldn't go in the parlour, but come right out here in her fine clothes. I told her I didn't think she belonged in a kitchen—but I guess I did her an injustice," said Euphrasia, slowly.

"I think you did," he said, and wondered.

"She looked at that garden," Euphrasia went on, "and cried out. I didn't callate she was like that. And the first thing I knew I was talking about your mother, and I'd forgot who I was talking to. She wahn't like a stranger—it was just as if I'd known her always. I haven't understood it yet. And after awhile I told her about that verse, and she wanted to see it—the verse about the skylark, you know—"

"Yes," said Austen.

"Well, the way she read it made me cry, it brought back Sarah Austen so. Somehow, I can't account for it, she puts me in mind of your mother."

Austen did not speak.

"In more ways than one," said Euphrasia. "I didn't look to find her so natural—and so gentle. And then she has a way of scolding you, just as Sarah Austen had, that you'd never suspect."

"Did she scold you—Phrasie?" asked Austen. And the irresistible humour that is so near to sorrow made him smile again.

"Indeed she did! And it surprised me some—coming right out of a summer sky. I told her what I thought about Hilary, and how he'd driven you out of your own mother's house. She said you'd ought to be sent for, and I said you oughtn't to set foot in this house until Hilary sent for you. She said I'd no right to take such a revenge—that you'd come right away if you knew Hilary'd had a stroke, and that Hilary'd never send for you—because he couldn't. She said he was like a man on a desert island."

"She was right," answered Austen.

"I don't know about that," said Euphrasia; "she hadn't

put up with Hilary for forty years, as I had, and seen what he'd done to your mother and you. But that's what she said. And she went for you herself, when she found the doctor couldn't go. Austen, ain't you going to see her?"

Austen shook his head gently, and smiled at her.

"I'm afraid it's no use, Phrasie," he said. "Just because she has been—kind, we mustn't be deceived. It's her nature to be kind."

Euphrasia crossed the room swiftly, and seized his arm again.

"She loves you, Austen," she cried; "she loves *you*. Do you think that I'd love *her*, that I'd plead for her, if she didn't?"

Austen's breath came deeply. He disengaged himself, and went to the window.

"No," he said, "you don't know. You can't know. I have only seen her—a few times. She lives a different life—and with other people. She will marry a man who can give her more."

"Do you think I could be deceived?" exclaimed Euphrasia, almost fiercely. "It's as true as the sun shining on that mountain. You believe she loves the Englishman, but I tell you she loves you—you."

He turned towards her.

"How do you know?" he asked, as though he were merely curious.

"Because I'm a woman, and she's a woman," said Euphrasia. "Oh, she didn't confess it. If she had, I shouldn't think so much of her. But she told me as plain as though she had spoken it in words, before she left this room."

Austen shook his head again.

"Phrasie," he said, "I'm afraid you've been building

castles in Spain." And he went out, and across to the stable to harness Pepper.

Austen did not believe Euphrasia. On that eventful evening when Victoria had called at Jabe Jenney's, the world's aspect had suddenly changed for him; old values had faded,—values which, after all, had been but tints and glows,—and sterner but truer colours took their places. He saw Victoria's life in a new perspective—one in which his was but a small place in the background of her numerous beneficences; which was, after all, the perspective in which he had first viewed it. But, by degrees, the hope that she loved him had grown and grown until it had become unconsciously the supreme element of his existence,—the hope that stole sweetly into his mind with the morning light, and stayed him through the day, and blended into the dreams of darkness.

By inheritance, by tradition, by habits of thought, Austen Vane was an American,—an American as differentiated from the citizen of any other nation upon the earth. The French have an expressive phrase in speaking of a person as belonging to this or that world, meaning the circle by which the life of an individual is bounded; the true American recognises these circles—but with complacency, and with a sure knowledge of his destiny eventually to find himself within the one for which he is best fitted by his talents and his tastes. The mere fact that Victoria had been brought up amongst people with whom he had nothing in common would not have deterred Austen Vane from pressing his suit; considerations of honour had stood in the way, and hope had begun to whisper that these might, in the end, be surmounted. Once they had disappeared, and she loved him, that were excuse and reason enough.

And suddenly the sight of Victoria with a probable

sutor—who at once had become magnified into an accepted suitor—had dispelled hope. Euphrasia! Euphrasia had been deceived as he had, by a loving kindness and a charity that were natural. But what so natural (to one who had lived the life of Austen Vane) as that she should marry amongst those whose ways of life were her ways? In the brief time in which he had seen her and this other man, Austen's quickened perceptions had detected tacit understanding, community of interest, a habit of thought and manner,—in short, a common language, unknown to him, between the two. And, more than these, the Victoria of the blissful excursions he had known was changed as she had spoken to him—constrained, distant, apart; although still dispensing kindness, going out of her way to bring Hilary home, and to tell him of Hilary's accident. Rumour, which cannot be confined in casks or bottles, had since informed Austen Vane that Mr. Rangely had spent the day with Victoria, and had remained at Fairview far into the evening; rumour went farther (thanks to Mrs. Pomfret) and declared the engagement already an accomplished fact. And to Austen, in the twilight in front of Jabe Jenney's, the affair might well have assumed the proportions of an intimacy of long standing rather than that of the chance acquaintance of an hour. Friends in common, modes of life in common, and incidents in common are apt to sweep away preliminaries.

Such were Austen's thoughts as he drove to Fairview that September afternoon when the leaves were turning their white backs to the northwest breeze. The sun was still high, and the distant hills and mountains were as yet scarce stained with blue, and stood out in startling clearness against the sky. Would he see her? That were a pain he scarce dared contemplate.

He reached the arched entrance, was on the drive. Here was the path again by which she had come down the hillside; here was the very stone on which she had stood—awaiting him. Why? Why had she done that? Well-remembered figure amidst the yellow leaves dancing in the sunlight! Here he had stopped, perforce, and here she had looked up into his face and smiled and spoken!

At length he gained the plateau across which the driveway ran, between round young maples, straight to Fairview House, and he remembered the stares from the tea-tables, and how she had come out to his rescue. Now the lawn was deserted, save for a gardener among the shrubs. He rang the stable-bell, and as he waited for an answer to his summons, the sense of his remoteness from these surroundings of hers deepened, and with a touch of inevitable humour he recalled the low-ceiled bedroom at Mr. Jenney's and the kitchen in Hanover Street; the annual cost of the care of that lawn and driveway might well have maintained one of these households.

He told the stable-boy to wait. It is to be remarked as curious that the name of the owner of the house on Austen's lips brought the first thought of him to Austen's mind. He was going to see and speak with Mr. Flint,—a man who had been his enemy ever since the day he had come here and laid down his pass on the president's desk; the man who—so he believed until three days ago—had stood between him and happiness. Well, it did not matter now.

Austen followed the silent-moving servant through the hall. Those were the stairs which knew her feet, these the rooms—so subtly flower-scented—she lived in; then came the narrow passage to the sterner apartment of the master himself. Mr. Flint was alone, and seated upright

behind the massive oak desk, from which bulwark the president of the Northeastern was wont to meet his opponents and his enemies; and few visitors came into his presence, here or elsewhere, who were not to be got the better of, if possible. A life-long habit had accustomed Mr. Flint to treat all men as adversaries until they were proved otherwise. His square, close-cropped head, his large features, his alert eyes, were those of a fighter.

He did not rise, but nodded. Suddenly Austen was enveloped in a flame of wrath that rose without warning and blinded him, and it was with a supreme effort to control himself that he stopped in the doorway. He was frightened, for he had felt this before, and he knew it for the anger that demands physical violence.

"Come in, Mr. Vane," said the president.

Austen advanced to the desk, and laid the boxes before Mr. Flint.

"Mr. Vane told me to say that he would have brought these himself, had it been possible. Here is the list, and I shall be much obliged if you will verify it before I go back."

"Sit down," said Mr. Flint.

Austen sat down, with the corner of the desk between them, while Mr. Flint opened the boxes and began checking off the papers on the list.

"How is your father this afternoon?" he asked, without looking up.

"As well as can be expected," said Austen.

"Of course nobody knew his condition but himself," Mr. Flint continued; "but it was a great shock to me when he resigned as my counsel three days ago."

Austen laid his forearm on the desk, and his hand closed.

"He resigned three days ago?" he exclaimed.

Mr. Flint was surprised, but concealed it.

"I can understand, under the circumstances, how he has overlooked telling you. His resignation takes effect to-day."

Austen was silent a moment, while he strove to apply this fact to his father's actions.

"He waited until after the convention."

"Exactly," said Mr. Flint, catching the implied accusation in Austen's tone; "and needless to say, if I had been able to prevent his going, in view of what happened on Monday night, I should have done so. As you know, after his—accident, he went to the capital without informing anyone."

"As a matter of honour," said Austen.

Mr. Flint looked up from the papers, and regarded him narrowly, for the tone in which this was spoken did not escape the president of the Northeastern. He saw, in fact, that at the outset he had put a weapon into Austen's hands. Hilary's resignation was a vindication of Austen's attitude, an acknowledgment that the business and political practices of his life had been wrong.

What Austen really felt, when he had grasped the significance of that fact, was relief—gratitude. A wave of renewed affection for his father swept over him, of affection and pity and admiration, and for the instant he forgot Mr. Flint.

"As a matter of honour," Mr. Flint repeated. "Knowing he was ill, Mr. Vane insisted upon going to that convention, even at the risk of his life. It is a fitting close to a splendid career, and one that will not soon be forgotten."

Austen merely looked at Mr. Flint, who may have found the glance a trifle disconcerting, for he turned to the papers again.

"I repeat," he went on presently, "that this illness of Mr. Vane's is not only a great loss to the Northeastern system, but a great blow to me personally. I have been associated with him closely for more than a quarter of a century, and I have never seen a lawyer of greater integrity, clear-headedness, and sanity of view. He saw things as they were, and he did as much to build up the business interests and the prosperity of this State as any man I know of. He was true to his word, and true to his friends."

Still Austen did not reply. He continued to look at Mr. Flint, and Mr. Flint continued to check the papers—only more slowly. He had nearly finished the first box.

"A wave of political insanity, to put it mildly, seems to be sweeping over this country," said the president of the Northeastern. "Men who would paralyse and destroy the initiative of private enterprise, men who themselves are ambitious, and either incapable or unsuccessful, have sprung up; writers who have no conscience, whose one idea is to make money out of a passing craze against honest capital, have aided them. Disappointed and dangerous politicians who merely desire office and power have lifted their voices in the hue and cry to fool the honest voter. I am glad to say I believe that the worst of this madness and rascality is over; that the commonsense of the people of this country is too great to be swept away by the methods of these self-seekers; that the ordinary man is beginning to see that his bread and butter depends on the brain of the officers who are trying honestly to conduct great enterprises for the benefit of the average citizen.

"We did not expect to escape in this State," Mr. Flint went on, raising his head and meeting Austen's look; "the disease was too prevalent and too catching for the weak-minded. We had our self-seekers who attempted to

bring ruin upon an institution which has done more for our population than any other. I do not hesitate to speak of the Northeastern Railroads as an institution, and as an institution which has been as conscientiously and conservatively conducted as any in the country, and with as scrupulous a regard for the welfare of all. Hilary Vane, as you doubtless know, was largely responsible for this. My attention, as president of all the roads, has been divided. Hilary Vane guarded the interests in this State, and no man could have guarded them better. He well deserves the thanks of future generations for the uncompromising fight he made against such men and such methods. It has broken him down at a time of life when he has earned repose, but he has the satisfaction of knowing that he has won the battle for conservative American principles, and that he has nominated a governor worthy of the traditions of the State."

And Mr. Flint started checking off the papers again. Had the occasion been less serious, Austen could have smiled at Mr. Flint's ruse—so characteristic of the tactics of the president of the Northeastern—of putting him into a position where criticism of the Northeastern and its practices would be criticism of his own father. As it was, he only set his jaw more firmly, an expression indicative of contempt for such tactics. He had not come there to be lectured out of the "Book of Arguments" on the divine right of railroads to govern, but to see that certain papers were delivered in safety.

Had his purpose been deliberately to enter into a contest with Mr. Flint, Austen could not have planned the early part of it any better than by pursuing this policy of silence. To a man of Mr. Flint's temperament and training, it was impossible to have such an opponent within

reach without attempting to hector him into an acknowledgment of the weakness of his position. Further than this, Austen had touched him too often on the quick merely to be considered in the light of a young man who held opposite and unfortunate views—although it was Mr. Flint's endeavour to put him in this light. The list of injuries was too fresh in Mr. Flint's mind—even that last conversation with Victoria, in which she had made it plain that her sympathies were with Austen.

But with an opponent who would not be led into ambush, who had the strength to hold his fire under provocation, it was no easy matter to maintain a height of conscious, matter-of-fact rectitude and implied reproof. Austen's silence, Austen's attitude, declared louder than words the contempt for such manoeuvres of a man who knows he is in the right—and knows that his adversary knows it. It was this silence and this attitude which proclaimed itself that angered Mr. Flint, yet made him warily conceal his anger and change his attack.

"It is some years since we met, Mr. Vane," he remarked presently.

Austen's face relaxed into something of a smile.

"Four, I think," he answered.

"You hadn't long been back from that Western experience. Well, your father has one decided consolation; you have fulfilled his hope that you would settle down here and practise in the State. And I hear that you are fast forging to the front. You are counsel for the Gaylord Company, I believe."

"The result of an unfortunate accident," said Austen; "Mr. Hammer died."

"And on the occasion when you did me the honour to call on me," said Mr. Flint, "if I remember rightly,

you expressed some rather radical views—for the son of Hilary Vane."

"For the son of Hilary Vane," Austen agreed, with a smile.

Mr. Flint ignored the implication in the repetition.

"Thinking as much as I do of Mr. Vane, I confess that your views at that time rather disturbed me. It is a matter of relief to learn that you have refused to lend yourself to the schemes of men like our neighbour, Mr. Humphrey Crewe, of Leith."

"Honesty compels me to admit," answered Austen, "that I did not refrain on Mr. Crewe's account."

"Although," said Mr. Flint, drumming on the table, "there was some talk that you were to be brought forward as a dark horse in the convention, and as a candidate unfriendly to the interests of the Northeastern Railroads, I am glad you did not consent to be put in any such position. I perceive that a young man of your ability and—popularity, a Vane of Camden Street, must inevitably become a force in this State. And as a force, you must retain the conservatism of the Vanes—the traditional conservatism of the State. The Northeastern Railroads will continue to be a very large factor in the life of the people after you and I are gone, Mr. Vane. You will have to live, as it were, with that corporation, and help to preserve it. We shall have to work together, perhaps, to that end—who can say? I repeat, I am glad that your good sense led you to refrain from coming as a candidate before that Convention. There is time enough in the future, and you could not have been nominated."

"On the contrary," answered Austen, quietly, "I could have been nominated."

Mr. Flint smiled knowingly—but with an effort. What a relief it would have been to him to charge horse and foot, to forget that he was a railroad president dealing with a potential power.

"Do you honestly believe that?" he asked.

"I am not accustomed to dissemble my beliefs," said Austen, gravely. "The fact that my father had faith enough in me to count with certainty on my refusal to go before the convention enabled him to win the nomination for the candidate of your railroads."

Mr. Flint continued to smile, but into his eyes had crept a gleam of anger.

"It is easy to say such things—after the convention," he remarked.

"And it would have been impossible to say them before," Austen responded instantly, with a light in his own eyes. "My nomination was the only disturbing factor in the situation for you and the politicians who had your interests in hand, and it was as inevitable as night and day that the forces of the candidates who represented the two wings of the machine of the Northeastern Railroads should have united against Mr. Crewe. I want to say to you frankly that if my father had not been the counsel for your corporation, and responsible for its political success, or if he could have resigned with honour before the convention, I should not have refused to let my name go in. After all," he added, in a lower tone, and with a slight gesture characteristic of him when a subject was distasteful, "it doesn't matter who is elected governor this autumn."

"What?" cried Mr. Flint, surprised out of his attitude as much by Austen's manner as by Austen's words.

"It doesn't matter," said Austen, "whether the North-

eastern Railroads have succeeded this time in nominating and electing a governor to whom they can dictate, and who will reappoint railroad commissioners and other State officials in their interests. The practices by which you have controlled this State, Mr. Flint, and elected governors and councillors and State and national senators are doomed. However necessary these practices may have been from your point of view, they violated every principle of free government, and were they to continue, the nation to which we belong would inevitably decay and become the scorn of the world. Those practices depended for their success on one condition,—which in itself is the most serious of ills in a republic,—the ignorance and disregard of the voter. You have but to read the signs of the times to see clearly that the day of such conditions is past, to see that the citizens of this State and this country are thinking for themselves, as they should; are alive to the danger, and determined to avert it. You may succeed in electing one more governor and one more senate, or two, before the people are able to destroy the machinery you have built up and repeal the laws you have made to sustain it. I repeat, it doesn't matter in the long run. The era of political domination by a corporation, and mainly for the benefit of a corporation, is over."

Mr. Flint had been drumming on the desk, his face growing a darker red as Austen proceeded. Never, since he had become president of the Northeastern Railroads, had any man said such things to his face. And the fact that Austen Vane had seemingly not spoken in wrath, although forcefully enough to compel him to listen, had increased Mr. Flint's anger. Austen apparently cared very little for him or his opinions in comparison with his own estimate of right and wrong.

"It seems," said Mr. Flint, "that you have grown more radical since your last visit."

"If it be radical to refuse to accept a pass from a railroad to bind my liberty of action as an attorney and a citizen, then I am radical," replied Austen. "If it be radical to maintain that the elected representatives of the people should not receive passes, or be beholden to any man or any corporation, I acknowledge the term. If it be radical to declare that these representatives should be elected without interference, and while in office should do exact justice to the body of citizens on the one hand and the corporations on the other, I declare myself a radical. But my radicalism goes back behind the establishment of railroads, Mr. Flint, back to the foundation of this government, to the idea from which it sprang."

Mr. Flint smiled again.

"We have changed materially since then," he said. "I am afraid such a utopian state of affairs, beautiful as it is, will not work in the twentieth century. It is a commercial age, and the interests which are the bulwark of the country's strength must be protected."

"Yes," said Austen, "we have changed *materially*. The mistake you make, and men like you, is the stress which you lay on that word *material*. Are there no such things as *moral* interests, Mr. Flint? And are they not quite as important in government, if not more important, than material interests? Surely, we cannot have commercial and political stability without commercial and political honour! If, as a nation, we lose sight of the ideals which have carried us so far, which have so greatly modified the conditions of other peoples than ourselves, we shall perish as a force in the world. And if this government proves a failure, how long do you think the

material interests of which you are so solicitous will endure? Or do you care whether they endure beyond your lifetime? Perhaps not. But it is a matter of importance, not only to the nation, but to the world, whether or not the moral idea of the United States of America is perpetuated, I assure you."

"I begin to fear, Mr. Vane," said the president of the Northeastern, "that you have missed your vocation. Suppose I were to grant you, for the sake of argument, that the Northeastern Railroads, being the largest taxpayers in this State, have taken an interest in seeing that conservative men fill responsible offices. Suppose such to be the case, and we abruptly cease—to take such an interest. What then? Are we not at the mercy of any and all unscrupulous men who build up a power of their own, and start again the blackmail of the old days?"

"You have put the case mildly," said Austen, "and ingeniously. As a matter of fact, Mr. Flint, you know as well as I do that for years you have governed this State absolutely, for the purpose of keeping down your taxes, avoiding unnecessary improvements for safety and comfort, and paying high dividends—"

"Perhaps you realise that in depicting these criminal operations so graphically," cried Mr. Flint, interrupting, "you are involving the reputation of one of the best citizens the State ever had—your own father."

Austen Vane leaned forward across the desk, and even Mr. Flint (if the truth were known) recoiled a little before the anger he had aroused. It shot forth from Austen's eyes, proclaimed itself in the squareness of the face, and vibrated in every word he spoke.

"Mr. Flint," he said, "I refrain from comment upon your methods of argument. There were many years in

which my father believed the practices which he followed in behalf of your railroad to be necessary—and hence justified. And I have given you the credit of holding the same belief. Public opinion would not, perhaps, at that time have protected your property from political blackmail. I merely wished you to know, Mr. Flint, that there is no use in attempting to deceive me in regard to the true colour of those practices. It is perhaps useless for me to add that in my opinion you understand as well as I do the real reason for Mr. Vane's resignation and illness. Once he became convinced that the practices were wrong, he could no longer continue them without violating his conscience. He kept his word to you—at the risk of his life, and, as his son, I take a greater pride in him to-day than I ever have before."

Austen got to his feet. He was formidable even to Mr. Flint, who had met many formidable and angry men in his time—although not of this type. Perhaps—who can say?—he was the unconscious embodiment in the mind of the president of the Northeastern of the new forces which had arisen against him,—forces which he knew in his secret soul he could not combat, because they were the irresistible forces of things not material. All his life he had met and successfully conquered forces of another kind, and put down with a strong hand merely physical encroachments.

Mr. Flint's nature was not an introspective one, and if he had tried, he could not have accounted for his feelings. He was angry—that was certain. But he measured the six feet and more of Austen Vane with his eye, and in spite of himself experienced the compelled admiration of one fighting man for another. A thought, which had made itself vaguely felt at intervals in the past half hour,

shot suddenly and poignantly through Mr. Flint's mind: what if this young man, who dared in spite of every interest to oppose him, should in the apparently inevitable trend of things, become . . . ?

Mr. Flint rose and went to the window, where he stood silent for a space, looking out, played upon by unwonted conflicting thoughts and emotions. At length, with a characteristic snap of the fingers, he turned abruptly. Austen Vane was still standing beside the desk. His face was still square, determined, but Mr. Flint noted curiously that the anger was gone from his eyes, and that another—although equally human—expression had taken its place,—a more disturbing expression, to Mr. Flint.

"It appears, Mr. Vane," he said, gathering up the papers and placing them in the boxes, "it appears that we are able to agree upon one point, at least—Hilary Vane."

"Mr. Flint," said Austen, "I did not come up here with any thought of arguing with you, of intruding any ideas I may hold, but you have yourself asked me one question which I feel bound to answer to the best of my ability before I go. You have asked me what, in my opinion, would happen if you ceased—as you express it—to take an interest in the political affairs of this State.

"I believe, as firmly as I stand here, that the public opinion which exists to-day would protect your property, and I base that belief on the good sense of the average American voter. The public would protect you not only in its own interests, but from an inherent sense of fair play. On the other hand, if you persist in a course of political manipulation which is not only obsolete but wrong, you will magnify the just charges against you, and the just wrath; you will put ammunition into the hands of

the agitators you rightly condemn. The stock-holders of your corporation, perhaps, are bound to suffer some from the fact that you have taken its life-blood to pay dividends, and the public will demand that it be built up into a normal and healthy condition. On the other hand, it could not have gone on as it was. But the corporation will suffer much more if a delayed justice is turned into vengeance.

"You ask me what I could do. I should recognise, frankly, the new conditions, and declare as frankly what the old ones were, and why such methods of defence as you adopted were necessary and justified. I should announce, openly, that from this day onward the North-eastern Railroads depended for fair play on an enlightened public—and I think your trust would be well founded, and your course vindicated. I should declare, from this day onward, that the issue of political passes, newspaper passes, and all other subterfuges would be stopped, and that all political hirelings would be dismissed. I should appeal to the people of this State to raise up political leaders who would say to the corporations, 'We will protect you from injustice if you will come before the elected representatives of the people, openly, and say what you want and why you want it.' By such a course you would have, in a day, the affection of the people instead of their distrust. They would rally to your defence. And, more than that, you would have done a service for American government the value of which cannot well be estimated."

Mr. Flint rang the bell on his desk, and his secretary appeared.

"Put these in my private safe, Mr. Freeman," he said.

Mr. Freeman took the boxes, glanced curiously at

Austen, and went out. It was the same secretary, Austen recalled, who had congratulated him four years before. Then Mr. Flint laid his hand deliberately on the desk, and smiled slightly as he turned to Austen.

"If you had run a railroad as long as I have, Mr. Vane," he said, "I do you the credit of thinking that you would have intelligence enough to grasp other factors which your present opportunities for observation have not permitted you to perceive. Nevertheless, I am much obliged to you for your opinion, and I value the—frankness in which it was given. And I shall hope to hear good news of your father. Remember me to him, and tell him how deeply I feel his affliction. I shall call again in a day or two."

Austen took up his hat.

"Good day, Mr. Flint," he said; "I will tell him."

By the time he had reached the door, Mr. Flint had gone back to the window once more, and appeared to have forgotten his presence.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE VALE OF THE BLUE.

AUSTEN himself could not well have defined his mental state as he made his way through the big rooms towards the door, but he was aware of one main desire—to escape from Fairview. With the odours of the flowers in the tall silver vases on the piano—her piano!—the spirit of desire which had so long possessed him, waking and sleeping, returned,—returned to torture him now with greater skill amidst these her possessions; her volume of

Chopin on the rack, bound in red leather and stamped with her initials, which compelled his glance as he passed, and brought vivid to his memory the night he had stood in the snow and heard her playing. So, he told himself, it must always be, for him to stand in the snow—listening.

He reached the hall, with a vast relief perceived that it was empty, and opened the door and went out. Strange that he should note, first of all, as he paused a moment at the top of the steps, that the very day had changed! The wind had fallen; the sun, well on his course towards the rim of western hills, poured the golden light of autumn over field and forest, while Sawanec was already in the blue shadow; the expectant stillness of autumn reigned, and all unconsciously Austen's blood was quickened—though a quickening of pain.

The surprise of the instant over, he noticed that his horse was gone,—had evidently been taken to the stables. And rather than ring the bell and wait in the mood in which he found himself, he took the path through the shrubbery from which he had seen the groom emerge. It turned beyond the corner of the house, descended a flight of stone steps, and turned again.

* * * *

They stood gazing each at the other for a space of time not to be computed before either spoke, and the sense of unreality which comes with a sudden fulfilment of intense desire—or dread—was upon Austen. Could this indeed be her figure, and this her face on which he watched the colour rise (so he remembered afterwards) like the slow flood of day? Were there so many Victorias, that a new one—and a strange one—should confront him at every meeting? And, even while he looked, this

Victoria, too,—one who had been near him and departed,—was surveying him now from an unapproachable height of self-possession and calm. She held out her hand, and he took it, scarce knowing that it was hers.

"How do you do, Mr. Vane?" she said; "I did not expect to meet you here."

"I was searching for the stable, to get my horse," he answered lamely.

"And your father?" she asked quickly; "I hope he is not—worse."

It was thus she supplied him, quite naturally, with an excuse for being at Fairview. And yet her solicitude for Hilary was wholly unaffected.

"Dr. Harmon, who came from New York, has been more encouraging than I had dared to hope," said Austen. "And, by the way, Mr. Vane believes that you had a share in the fruit and flowers which Mr. Flint so kindly brought. If—he had known that I were to see you, I am sure he would have wished me to thank you."

Victoria turned, and tore a leaf from the spiræa.

"I will show you where the stables are," she said; "the path divides a little farther on—and you might find yourself in the kitchen."

Austen smiled, and as she went on slowly, he followed her, the path not being wide enough for them to walk abreast, his eyes caressing the stray hairs that clustered about her neck and caught the light. It seemed so real, and yet so unrealisable, that he should be here with her.

"I am afraid," he said, "that I did not express my gratitude as I should have done the evening you were good enough to come up to Jabe Jenney's."

He saw her colour rise again, but she did not pause.

"Please don't say anything about it, Mr. Vane. Of course I understand how you felt," she cried.

"Neither my father nor myself will forget that service," said Austen.

"It was nothing," answered Victoria, in a low voice. "Or, rather, it was something I shall always be glad that I did not miss. I have seen Mr. Vane all my life, but I never—never really knew him until that day. I have come to the conclusion," she added, in a lighter tone, "that the young are not always the best judges of the old. There," she added, "is the path that goes to the kitchen, which you probably would have taken."

He laughed. Past and future were blotted out, and he lived only in the present. He could think of nothing but that she was here beside him. Afterwards, cataclysms might come and welcome.

"Isn't there another place," he asked, "where I might lose my way?"

She turned and gave him one of the swift, searching looks he recalled so well: a look the meaning of which he could not declare, save that she seemed vainly striving to fathom something in him—as though he were not fathomable! He thought she smiled a little as she took the left-hand path.

"You will remember me to your father?" she said. "I hope he is not suffering."

"He is not suffering," Austen replied. "Perhaps—if it were not too much to ask—perhaps you might come to see him, some time? I can think of nothing that would give him greater pleasure."

"I will come—some time," she answered. "I am going away to-morrow, but—"

"Away?" he repeated, in dismay. Now that he was

beside her, all unconsciously the dominating male spirit which was so strong in him, and which moves not woman alone, but the world, was asserting itself. For the moment he was the only man, and she the only woman, in the universe.

"I am going on a promised visit to a friend of mine."

"For how long?" he demanded.

"I don't know," said Victoria, calmly; "probably until she gets tired of me. And there," she added, "are the stables, where no doubt you will find your faithful Pepper."

They had come out upon an elevation above the hard service drive, and across it, below them, was the coach house with its clock-tower and weather-vane, and its two wings, enclosing a paved court where a whistling stable-boy was washing a carriage. Austen regarded this scene an instant, and glanced back at her profile. It was expressionless.

"Might I not linger—a few minutes?" he asked.

Her lips parted slightly in a smile, and she turned her head. How wonderfully, he thought, it was poised upon her shoulders.

"I haven't been very hospitable, have I?" she said. "But then, you seemed in such a hurry to go, didn't you? You were walking so fast when I met you that you quite frightened me."

"Was I?" asked Austen, in surprise.

She laughed.

"You looked as if you were ready to charge somebody. But this isn't a very nice place—to linger, and if you really will stay awhile," said Victoria, "we might walk over to the dairy, where that model *protégé* of yours, Eben Fitch, whom you once threatened with corporal

chastisement if he fell from grace, is engaged. I know he will be glad to see you."

Austen laughed as he caught up with her. She was already halfway across the road.

"Do you always beat people if they do wrong?" she asked.

"It was Eben who requested it, if I remember rightly," he said. "Fortunately, the trial has not yet arrived. Your methods," he added, "seem to be more successful with Eben."

They went down the grassy slope with its groups of half-grown trees; through an orchard shot with slanting, yellow sunlight,—the golden fruit, harvested by the morning winds, littering the ground; and then by a gate into a dimpled, emerald pasture slope where the Guernseys were feeding along a water run. They spoke of trivial things that found no place in Austen's memory, and at times, upon one pretext or another, he fell behind a little that he might feast his eyes upon her.

Eben was not at the dairy, and Austen betraying no undue curiosity as to his whereabouts, they walked on: up the slopes, and still upward towards the crest of the range of hills that marked the course of the Blue. He did not allow his mind to dwell upon this new footing they were on, but clung to it. Before, in those delicious moments with her, seemingly pilfered from the angry gods, the sense of intimacy had been deep; deep, because robbing the gods together, they had shared the feeling of guilt, had known that retribution would come. And now the gods had locked their treasure-chest, although themselves powerless to redeem from him the memory of what he had gained. Nor could they, apparently, deprive him of the vision of her in the fields and woods beside him,

though transformed by their magic into a new Victoria, keeping him lightly and easily at a distance.

Scattering the sheep that flecked the velvet turf of the uplands, they stood at length on the granite crown of the crest itself. Far below them wound the Blue into its vale of sapphire shadows, with its hillsides of the mystic fabric of the backgrounds of the masters of the Renaissance. For awhile they stood in silence under the spell of the scene's enchantment, and then Victoria seated herself on the rock, and he dropped to a place at her side.

"I thought you would like the view," she said; "but perhaps you have been here, perhaps I am taking you to one of your own possessions."

He had flung his hat upon the rock, and she glanced at his serious, sunburned face. His eyes were still fixed, contemplatively, on the Vale of the Blue, but he turned to her with a smile.

"It has become yours by right of conquest," he answered.

She did not reply to that. The immobility of her face, save for the one look she had flashed upon him, surprised and puzzled him more and more—the world-old, indefinable, eternal feminine quality of the Sphinx.

"So you refused to be governor?" she said presently, —surprising him again.

"It scarcely came to that," he replied.

"What did it come to?" she demanded.

He hesitated.

"I had to go down to the capital, on my father's account, but I did not go to the convention. I stayed," he said slowly, "at the little cottage across from the Duncan house where—you were last winter." He paused, but

she gave no sign. "Tom Gaylord came up there late in the afternoon, and wanted me to be a candidate."

"And you refused?"

"Yes."

"But you could have been nominated."

"Yes," he admitted; "it is probable. The conditions were chaotic."

"Are you sure you have done right?" she asked. "It has always seemed to me from what I know and have heard of you that you were made for positions of trust. You would have been a better governor than the man they have nominated."

His expression became set.

"I am sure I have done right," he answered deliberately. "It doesn't make any difference who is governor this time."

"Doesn't make any difference!" she exclaimed.

"No," he said. "Things have changed—the people have changed. The old method of politics, which was wrong, although it had some justification in conditions, has gone out. A new and more desirable state of affairs has come. I am at liberty to say this much to you now," he added, fixing his glance upon her, "because my father has resigned as counsel for the Northeastern, and I have just had a talk with—Mr. Flint."

"You have seen my father?" she asked, in a low voice, and her face was averted.

"Yes," he answered.

"You—did not agree," she said quickly.

His blood beat higher at the question and the manner of her asking it, but he felt that he must answer it honestly, unequivocally, whatever the cost.

"No, we did not agree. It is only fair to tell you that we differed—vitally. On the other hand, it is just

that you should know that we did not part in anger, but, I think, with a mutual respect."

She drew breath.

"I knew," she said, "I knew if he could but talk to you he would understand that you were sincere—and you have proved it. I am glad—I am glad that you saw him."

The quality of the sunlight changed, the very hills leaped, and the river sparkled. Could she care? Why did she wish her father to know that he was sincere?

"You are glad that I saw him!" he repeated.

But she met his glance steadily.

"My father has so little faith in human nature," she answered. "He has a faculty of doubting the honesty of his opponents—I suppose because so many of them have been dishonest. And—I believe in my friends," she added, smiling. "Isn't it natural that I should wish to have my judgment vindicated?"

He got to his feet and walked slowly to the far edge of the rock, where he stood for awhile, seemingly gazing off across the spaces to Sawanec. It was like him, thus to question the immutable. Victoria sat motionless, but her eyes followed irresistibly the lines of power in the tall figure against the sky—the breadth of shoulder and slimness of hip and length of limb typical of the men who had conquered and held this land for their descendants. Suddenly, with a characteristic movement of determination, he swung about and came towards her, and at the same instant she rose.

"Don't you think we should be going back?" she said. But he seemed not to hear her.

"May I ask you something?" he said.

"That depends," she answered.

"Are you going to marry Mr. Rangely?"

"No," she said, and turned away. "Why did you think that?"

He quivered.

"Victoria!"

She looked up at him, swiftly, half revealed, her eyes like stars surprised by the flush of dawn in her cheeks. Hope quickened at the vision of hope, the seats of judgment themselves were filled with radiance, and rumour cowered and fled like the spirit of night. He could only gaze, enraptured.

"Yes?" she answered.

His voice was firm but low, yet vibrant with sincerity, with the vast store of feeling, of compelling magnetism that was in the man and moved in spite of themselves those who knew him. His words Victoria remembered afterwards—all of them; but it was to the call of the voice she responded. His was the fibre which grows stronger in times of crisis. Sure of himself, proud of the love which he declared, he spoke as a man who has earned that for which he prays,—simply and with dignity.

"I love you," he said; "I have known it since I have known you, but you must see why I could not tell you so. It was very hard, for there were times when I led myself to believe that you might come to love me. There were times when I should have gone away if I hadn't made a promise to stay in Ripton. I ask you to marry me, because I know that I shall love you as long as I live. I can give you this, at least, and I can promise to protect and cherish you. I cannot give you that to which you have been accustomed all your life, that which you have here at Fairview, but I shouldn't say this to you if I believed that you cared for them above—other things."

"Oh, Austen!" she cried, "I do not—I do not! They would be hateful to me—without you. I would rather live with you—at Jabe Jenney's," and her voice caught in an exquisite note between laughter and tears. "I love you, do you understand, *you!* Oh, how could you ever have doubted it? How could you? What you believe, I believe. And, Austen, I have been so unhappy for three days."

He never knew whether, as the most precious of graces ever conferred upon man, with a womanly gesture she had raised her arms and laid her hands upon his shoulders before he drew her to him and kissed her face, that vied in colour with the coming glow in the western sky. Above the prying eyes of men, above the world itself, he held her, striving to realise some little of the vast joy of this possession, and failing. And at last she drew away from him, gently, that she might look searchingly into his face again, and shook her head slowly.

"And you were going away," she said, "without a word! I thought—you didn't care. How could I have known that you were just—stupid?"

His eyes lighted with humour and tenderness.

"How long have you cared, Victoria?" he asked.

She became thoughtful.

"Always, I think," she answered; "only I didn't know it. I think I loved you even before I saw you."

"Before you saw me!"

"I think it began," said Victoria, "when I learned that you had shot Mr. Blodgett—only I hope you will never do such a thing again. And you will please try to remember," she added, after a moment, "that I am neither Eben Fitch nor your friend, Tom Gaylord."

* * * * *

Sunset found them seated on the rock, with the waters

of the river turned to wine at the miracle in the sky—their miracle. At times their eyes wandered to the mountain, which seemed to regard them—from a discreet distance—with a kindly and protecting majesty.

"And you promised," said Victoria, "to take me up there. When will you do it?"

"I thought you were going away," he replied.

"Unforeseen circumstances," she answered, "have compelled me to change my plans."

"Then we will go to-morrow," he said.

"To the Delectable Land," said Victoria, dreamily; "your land, where we shall be—benevolent despots. Austen?"

"Yes?" He had not ceased to thrill at the sound of his name upon her lips.

"Do you think," she asked, glancing at him, "do you think you have money enough to go abroad—just for a little while?"

He laughed joyously.

"I don't know," he said, "but I shall make it a point to examine my bank-account to-night. I haven't done so—for some time."

"We will go to Venice, and drift about in a gondola on one of those grey days when the haze comes in from the Adriatic and touches the city with the magic of the past. Sometimes I like the grey days best—when I am happy. And then," she added, regarding him critically, "although you are very near perfection, there are some things you ought to see and learn to make your education complete. I will take you to all the queer places I love. When you are ambassador to France, you know, it would be humiliating to have an interpreter, wouldn't it?"

"What's the use of both of us knowing the language?" he demanded.

"I'm afraid we shall be—too happy," she sighed, presently.

"Too happy!" he repeated.

"I sometimes wonder," she said, "whether happiness and achievement go together. And yet—I feel sure that you will achieve."

"To please you, Victoria," he answered, "I think I should almost be willing to try."

CHAPTER XV.

P.S.

By request of one who has read thus far, and is still curious.

YES, and another who, in spite of himself, has fallen in love with Victoria and would like to linger awhile longer, even though it were with the paltry excuse of discussing that world-old question of hers—Can sublime happiness and achievement go together? Novels on the problem of sex nowadays often begin with marriages, but rarely discuss the happy ones; and many a woman is forced to sit wistfully at home while her companion soars.

"Yet may I look with heart unshook
On blow brought home or missed—

Yet may I hear with equal ear
The clarions down the List;

Yet set my lance above mischance
And ride the barriere—

Oh, hit or miss, how little 'tis,
My Lady is not there!"

A verse, in this connection, which may be a perversion of Mr. Kipling's meaning, but not so far from it, after all.

And yet, would the eagle attempt the great flights if contentment were on the plain? Find the mainspring of achievement, and you hold in your hand the secret of the world's mechanism. Some aver that it is woman.

Do the gods ever confer the rarest of gifts upon him to whom they have given pinions? Do they mate him, ever, with another who soars as high as he, who circles higher than he may circle higher still? Who can answer? Must those who soar be condemned to eternal loneliness, and was it a longing they did not comprehend which bade them stretch their wings toward the sun? Who can say?

Alas, we cannot write of the future of Austen and Victoria Vane! We can only surmise, and hope, and pray,—yes, and believe. Romance walks with parted lips and head raised to the sky; and let us follow her, because thereby our eyes are raised with hers. We must believe, or perish.

Postscripts are not fashionable. The satiated theatre-goer leaves before the end of the play, and has worked out the problem for himself long before the end of the last act. Sentiment is not supposed to exist in the orchestra seats. But above (in many senses) is the gallery, from whence an excited voice cries out when the sleeper returns to life, "It's Rip Van Winkle!" The gallery, where are the human passions which make this world our world; the gallery, played upon by anger, vengeance, derision, triumph, hate, and love; the gallery, which lingers and applauds long after the fifth curtain, and then goes reluctantly home—to dream. And he who scorns the gallery is no artist, for there lives the soul of art. We raise our eyes to it, and to it we dedicate this our play; and for it we lift the curtain once more after those in the orchestra have departed.

It is obviously impossible, in a few words, to depict the excitement in Ripton, in Leith, in the State at large, when it became known that the daughter of Mr. Flint was to marry Austen Vane,—a fitting if unexpected climax to a drama. How would Mr. Flint take it? Mr. Flint, it may be said, took it philosophically; and when Austen went up to see him upon this matter, he shook hands with his future son-in-law,—and they agreed to disagree. And beyond this it is safe to say that Mr. Flint was relieved; for in his secret soul he had for many years entertained a dread that Victoria might marry a foreigner. He had this consolation at any rate.

His wife denied herself for a day to her most intimate friends,—for it was she who had entertained visions of a title; and it was characteristic of the Rose of Sharon that she knew nothing of the Vanes beyond the name. The discovery that the Austens were the oldest family in the State was in the nature of a balm; and henceforth, in speaking of Austen, she never failed to mention the fact that his great-grandfather was Minister to Spain in the '30's,—a period when her own was engaged in a far different calling.

And Hilary Vane received the news with a grim satisfaction, Dr. Tredway believing that it had done more for him than any medicine or specialists. And when, one warm October day, Victoria herself came and sat beside the canopied bed, her conquest was complete: he surrendered to her as he had never before surrendered to man or woman or child, and the desire to live surged back into his heart,—the desire to live for Austen and Victoria. It became her custom to drive to Ripton in the autumn mornings and to sit by the hour reading to Hilary in the mellow sunlight in the lee of the house, near Sarah

Austen's little garden. Yes, Victoria believed she had developed in him a taste for reading; although he would have listened to Emerson from her lips.

And sometimes, when she paused after one of his long silences to glance at him, she would see his eyes fixed, with a strange rapt look, on the garden or the dim lavender form of Sawanec through the haze, and knew that he was thinking of a priceless thing which he had once possessed, and missed. Then Victoria would close the volume, and fall to dreaming, too.

What was happiness? Was it contentment? If it were, it might endure,—contentment being passive. But could active, aggressive, exultant joy exist for a lifetime, jealous of its least prerogative, perpetually watchful for its least abatement, singing unending anthems on its conquest of the world? The very intensity of her feelings at such times sobered Victoria—alarmed her. Was not perfection at war with the world's scheme, and did not achievement spring from a void?

But when Austen appeared, with Pepper, to drive her home to Fairview, his presence never failed to revive the fierce faith that it was his destiny to make the world better, and hers to help him. Wondrous afternoons they spent together in that stillest and most mysterious of seasons in the hill country—autumn! Autumn and happiness! Happiness as shameless as the flaunting scarlet maples on the slopes, defiant of the dying year of the future, shadowy and unreal as the hills before them in the haze. Once, after a long silence, she started from a revery with the sudden consciousness of his look intent upon her, and turned with parted lips and eyes which smiled at him out of troubled depths.

"Dreaming, Victoria?" he said.

"Yes," she answered simply, and was silent once more. He loved these silences of hers,—hinting, as they did, of unexplored chambers in an inexhaustible treasure-house which by some strange stroke of destiny was his. And yet he felt at times the vague sadness of them, like the sadness of the autumn, and longed to dispel it.

"It is so wonderful," she went on presently, in a low voice, "it is so wonderful I sometimes think that it must be like—like this; that it cannot last. I have been wondering whether we shall be as happy when the world discovers that you are great."

He shook his head at her slowly, in mild reproof.

"Isn't that borrowing trouble, Victoria?" he said. "I think you need have no fear of finding the world as discerning as yourself."

She searched his face.

"Will you ever change?" she asked.

"Yes," he said. "No man can stand such flattery as that without deteriorating, I warn you. I shall become consequential, and pompous, and altogether insupportable, and then you will leave me and never realise that it has been all your fault."

Victoria laughed. But there was a little tremor in her voice, and her eyes still rested on his face.

"But I am serious, Austen," she said. "I sometimes feel that, in the future, we shall not always have many such days as these. It's selfish, but I can't help it. There are so many things you will have to do without me. Don't you ever think of that?"

His eyes grew grave, and he reached out and took her hand in his.

"I think, rather, of the trials life may bring, Victoria," he answered, "of the hours when judgment halts, when

the way is not clear. Do you remember the last night you came to Jabe Jenney's? I stood in the road long after you had gone, and a desolation such as I had never known came over me. I went in at last, and opened a book to some verses I had been reading, which I shall never forget. Shall I tell you what they were?"

"Yes," she whispered.

"They contain my answer to your question," he said.

"What became of all the hopes,
Words and song and lute as well?
Say, this struck you—'When life gropes
Feebly for the path where fell
Light last on the evening slopes,

"'One friend in that path shall be,
To secure my step from wrong;
One to count night day for me,
Patient through the watches long,
Serving most with none to see.'

Victoria, can you guess who that friend is?"

She pressed his hand and smiled at him, but her eyes were wet.

"I have thought of it in that way, too, dear. But—but I did not know that you had. I do not think that many men have that point of view, Austen."

"Many men," he answered, "have not the same reason to be thankful as I."

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There is a time, when the first sharp winds which fill the air with flying leaves have come and gone, when the stillness has come again, and the sunlight is tinged with a yellower gold, and the pastures are still a vivid green, and

the mountain stained with a deeper blue than any gem, called Indian summer. And it was in this season that Victoria and Austen were married, in a little church at Tunbridge, near Fairview, by the bishop of the diocese, who was one of Victoria's dearest friends. Mr. Thomas Gaylord (for whose benefit there were many rehearsals) was best man, Miss Beatrice Chillingham maid of honour; and it was unanimously declared by Victoria's bridesmaids, who came up from New York, that they had fallen in love with the groom.

How describe the wedding breakfast and festivities at Fairview House, on a November day when young ladies could walk about the lawns in the filmiest of gowns! how recount the guests and leave out no friends—for none were left out! Mr. Jabe Jenney and Mrs. Jenney, who wept as she embraced both bride and groom; and Euphrasia, in a new steel-coloured silk and a state of absolute subjection and incredulous happiness. Would that there were time to chronicle that most amazing of conquests of Victoria over Euphrasia! And Mrs. Pomfret, who, remarkable as it may seem, not only recognised Austen without her lorgnette, but quite overwhelmed him with an unexpected cordiality, and declared her intention of giving them a dinner in New York.

"My dear," she said, after kissing Victoria twice, "he is *most* distinguished-looking—I had no idea—and a person who grows upon one. And I am told he is descended from Channing Austen, of whom I have often heard my grandfather speak. Victoria, I always had the greatest confidence in your judgment."

Although Victoria had a memory (what woman worth her salt has not?), she was far too happy to remind Mrs.

Pomfret of certain former occasions, and merely smiled in a manner which that lady declared to be enigmatic. She maintained that she had never understood Victoria, and it was characteristic of Mrs. Pomfret that her respect increased in direct proportion to her lack of understanding.

Mr. Thomas Gaylord, in a waistcoat which was the admiration of all who beheld it, proposed the health of the bride, and proved indubitably that the best of oratory has its origin in the heart and not in the mind,—for Tom had never been regarded by his friends as a Demosthenes. He was interrupted from time to time by shouts of laughter; certain episodes in the early career of Mr. Austen Vane (in which, if Tom was to be believed, he was an unwilling participant) were particularly appreciated. And shortly after that, amidst a shower of miscellaneous articles and rice, Mr. and Mrs. Vane took their departure.

They drove through the yellow sunlight to Ripton, with lingering looks at the hills which brought back memories of joys and sorrows, and in Hanover Street bade good-bye to Hilary Vane. A new and strange contentment shone in his face as he took Victoria's hand in his, and they sat with him until Euphrasia came. It was not until they were well on their way to New York that they opened the letter he had given them, and discovered that it contained something which would have enabled them to remain in Europe the rest of their lives—had they so chosen.

We must leave them amongst the sunny ruins of Italy and Greece and southern France, on a marvellous journey that was personally conducted by Victoria.

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Mr. Crewe was unable to go to the wedding, having to attend a directors' meeting of some importance in the West. He is still in politics, and still hopeful; and he was married, not long afterwards, to Miss Alice Pomfret.

THE END.